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The purpose of this research was to explore ‘call’ experiences of Baptist women in ministry. The three research questions that guided the research were: (1) How do Baptist women experience a call to ministry? (2) How do Baptist women respond to a call to ministry? and (3) How can Baptist churches and individuals better nurture and encourage women ministers in accepting and responding to their call?

The research examined the biblical and historical understandings of call and the history of women in the Baptist tradition, specifically the Southern Baptist tradition. The research was conducted through the lens of a Christian, Baptist, Feminist theology framework, and through narrative research methods. There were five Baptist women participants who underwent a series of three interviews.

Analysis of the interviews showed participants experienced the call to ministry within the Christian faith and community through service, feelings, and affirmation. Participants responded to the call to ministry with doubt, by consulting family members and ministerial role models, and by pursuing theological education. The analysis revealed ways Baptist churches and individuals can nurture and encourage women called to ministry including, creating safe and welcoming communities of faith, encouraging women to serve and lead in all areas of ministry, making women ministers and leaders visible, recognizing women doing ministry and offering affirmation, and sharing stories of women and call experiences.

The research showed that despite the conflict and oppression of the Southern Baptist tradition in relation to women's roles, Baptist women have experienced a call to professional ministry and have responded to that call. Research also revealed though call is a personal experience, Baptist individuals and churches can be an integral part of nurturing the call experience.

THE CALL EXPERIENCES OF BAPTIST
WOMEN IN MINISTRY

by

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To all Baptist women called to professional ministry

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PREFACE

I was in tenth grade. It was the day of the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT). As a motivated and accomplished student, I entered the PSAT with excitement and nervousness. I expected to be challenged by the content of the test, but that is not what challenged me the most. The session began with filling out general information. I had to write and bubble-in my name, address, and so on. Then there was a section that asked me to bubble-in my future college major and professional interests. I was stumped. I enjoyed so many different things and was not ready to decide what I was going to do with the rest of my life. I do not remember anything about the test questions from that day. All I remember was the empty feeling of not knowing what I was going to do with my life. I thought, prayed, and agonized over my future for the rest of the day.

Later that afternoon, I went to the locker room to prepare for volleyball. I was distant and still reeling from the effects of those introductory questions. I began to cry. I leaned against my locker and slide to the floor. I covered my face and continued to cry. After a while, a teammate returned to the locker room and found me crying. She asked, “What’s wrong?” I cried and mumbled, “I think God is calling me to be a pastor.” With a puzzled look, she said, “Well isn’t that a good thing?” I responded with, “I think so.” She gathered me off the floor and helped me to the volleyball court.

I know for the skeptic, the unbeliever, and maybe even the believer, that story may seem bizarre. But for me that day and story are special and sacred. On that day, I began to look at my life, faith, calling, and profession differently.

Of course, that day in the tenth grade was preceded by many things that allowed me to be open to God's call. I was raised in the Christian church. The Christian faith was important to my family. I spent almost every Sunday of my life at church and was also there for special events. The language of God and the Christian faith were familiar to me. The ideas of God's presence and purpose for my life were ingrained in me. I was fortunate to have men and women model church leadership throughout my childhood. Those men and women had a profound effect on my faith and call. At a young age, I desired to be involved in the ministry and work of God in and outside of the local church. My call experience did not begin on that day; it began long before the day of the PSAT.

My call experience did not end on the day of the PSAT. It continued throughout my life. After that day, I began to look at colleges with religious studies programs. I began to share with others that I felt God called me to serve in professional ministry. I began to take every opportunity for Christian service inside and outside of the church. From that day, on I began to pray, plan, and prepare for a professional career in ministry. On that day, I did not really know the extent and details of my call, but I knew God wanted me to do God's work as a career and I began to figure out what that meant. I started to uncover and realize my gifts for ministry. I looked for opportunities to serve. Soon after that day and after sharing my call with my church family, I preached my first sermon and taught my first Sunday School class, when I was sixteen. I also received encouragement and affirmation from my family and church family of my gifts for ministry. My call experience led me to study religion and Christian ministries in college

and further my education in divinity school. My call was experienced in the struggling of how to navigate the ministry profession as a part of a clergy couple. My call was experienced in the discerning of new opportunities and my first professional ministry position. My call has been a journey of discernment, affirmations, discouragements, struggles, and successes. The day of the PSAT was not the beginning or end of my call; it was a holy moment with God that allowed me to reflect on God's presence and call before and to seek God's presence and call after. My personal call experience influenced my personal understanding of call. More on the biblical, historical, and my personal understanding of call will be explored in Chapter I.

Choice to be Baptist

As a child, I was raised in the Presbyterian denomination. As a Presbyterian, I saw women in all roles of the church, including my mother who served as an elder. I experienced women as preachers, pastors, teachers, elders, deacons, etc. When I experienced my own personal call to the ministry, I was a part of that tradition. No one questioned my decision. No one denied my calling based on my gender. I was supported and encouraged by my family and my church family. It was not until I attended a Baptist university as a religion major that I faced my first opposition simply because of my gender. When asked what I was going to do with a religion major I answered, "Be a minister." The person responded, "You can't do that." I asked, "Why?" and received this response, "Because you are a woman." I had never heard that before. That conversation made me look deeper into the Baptist tradition and belief. While I expected

to be horrified, and sometimes I was, through my studies and reflection on my personal beliefs, I chose to be a part of the Baptist tradition. Much of my choice to live out my faith and calling within the Baptist tradition was based on the traditional Baptist freedoms: Bible Freedom, Soul Freedom, Church Freedom, and Religious Freedom. These freedoms are explored in relation to my theoretical framework in Chapter III.

As a Baptist woman minister I understand the history of oppression and tension in relation to women in leadership and ministry within the Southern Baptist tradition. Currently I serve in a church that aligns with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. I attest to the tension I experience daily as a woman minister in a tradition plagued by controversy and division. While I am accepted and affirmed by the congregation I serve, I also know the Baptist church down the street does not affirm women deacons or ministers and those resolutions and adaptations of the “Baptist Faith and Message” still exist. When I find myself in situations of ecumenical work, I often question how I will be received, or even how to introduce myself. While I have been called by God, ordained by the church, and affiliate with a Baptist entity that is known for its support of women ministers, I also know the history of the Southern Baptist Convention, its view of women, and its lasting effect on local churches and individuals. I know while the Baptist foundations of freedom afford my congregation the opportunity to ordain and affirm me, those freedoms also afford the Baptist church down the street to close its pulpit to me. I am also a woman and have learned to interpret scripture and history from a different perspective to better understand and exercise my soul freedom

within this tension. Therefore, as a Baptist woman minister, I live within this tension—called, equipped, and ordained to serve and knowing the baggage, controversy, and victory that comes with introducing myself as Rev. Sarah Boberg, or preaching from a sacred pulpit during the sacred time of worship. The history of women within the Southern Baptist context is presented in Chapter II.

Feminist Theology

When I was in divinity school I took a pastoral counseling class. Throughout the class we were challenged to view things from different perspectives in order to counsel others with different stories, contexts, and perspectives. I remember one day we studied the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), a very well-known story in the Bible. After we read the story, we read a few different interpretations of the story. One of the interpretations was from a feminist perspective. The author focused on the Good Samaritan's choice to show compassion for the injured man, enlist help from the innkeeper, and continue on his way. The author wrote about the tendency of many women to sacrifice themselves and their journeys for others. The author pointed out that the Good Samaritan showed compassion and may have delayed his trip, but continued his journey. That was the first time I had ever read such an interpretation. Reading the interpretation of a feminist theologian was exciting. It made sense to me. I thought about all the times I had sacrificed my goals for others. I thought about how I was reluctant to ask for help from others and tried to do everything by myself. After reading that feminist interpretation, that story had a different meaning. That interpretation forever impacted

my faith and challenged me to read and study scripture from different perspectives.

Throughout most of my faith journey, Bible narratives were read from the same patriarchal perspective. That was the first time I realized the Bible could be read, studied, and presented differently. That was my first introduction to Feminist Theology.

Implications of my identity as a woman who interprets and navigates my faith and call within this history, through facets of a Feminist Theology perspective, are discussed in relation to my theoretical framework in Chapter III.

Subjectivity

I am a Baptist woman serving in professional ministry. I have a personal call experience. I have faced some opposition to my call within the Baptist context.

However, I have been able to explore my call and serve professionally as a minister in a Baptist church setting. I am passionate about the topic of the call experiences of Baptist women ministers. My calling, gender and identity as a Baptist are all a part of who I am. My personal subjectivity cannot be denied in this research because subjectivity is a part of all qualitative research. However, I am mindful and honest about my closeness to this topic. More on subjectivity and the details of narrative research are discussed in the Methodology section, which is located in Appendix A.

Sharing Stories

A narrative research method is used for this project. This method allows for the acknowledgement of my own story and subjectivity, allows for the stories of the Baptist women ministers to guide the research, focuses on the inclusion of research not

traditionally researched within other methods, and works for change. More information about the realities of subjectivity and other details of narrative research is included in the Methodology section located in Appendix A. A huge part of the research focuses on the stories of the five Baptist women minister participants. The sharing and analyzing of their stories are presented in Chapter IV. The goal of collecting, sharing, and analyzing the stories was to answer the research questions for this project.

Central Research Questions

There are three overarching research questions that guide this study of the call experiences of Baptist women ministers. First, how do Baptist women experience a call to ministry? Second, how do Baptist women respond to the call to ministry? Lastly, how can Baptist churches and individuals help encourage and nurture women ministers in accepting and responding to their calling? These three research questions influence the entire study and presentation of this research project. A final review of these research questions in view of the analysis of the stories is presented in Chapter V.

Conclusion

I am passionate about the call experiences of Baptist women in ministry. This passion comes from a place of personal experience and hope. While the Southern Baptist tradition has continually discouraged women from leadership and ministry, Baptist women continue to experience and pursue a call to professional ministry; therefore, this call is important. I am passionate about God's call because I am a minister within the context of Christian community. I want to know how to better nurture the call of God

within the church, especially for Baptist women called to ministry, but also for all people. I am passionate about God's call and Baptist women ministers. I am hopeful these areas of focus will help Baptist individuals and churches grow in knowledge and ministry practices.

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CHAPTER I

BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CALL

The basis of this research project is an exploration into the call experiences of Baptist women ministers. To study the call experiences of Baptist women ministers, there first must be an understanding of the concept of calling within the Christian tradition. This first chapter seeks to give an understanding of call in the Bible and throughout history. The chapter also outlines the idea that dominates my personal understanding of call. Finally, this chapter focuses on calling, specifically related to professional ministry, and introduces a personal working definition of calling for this specific dissertation research.

General Definitions of Call

Defining and understanding “call,” “calling,” or the “call experience” are complicated tasks, because the call of God is sacred and personal. Sacred and/or holy moments are consistently hard for people, even people of faith to explain and understand. Even more, because the call of God is personal, and experienced and described by individuals from different backgrounds and different personalities, it is even more difficult to come up with a decisive and complete definition. “Even theologians do not agree on exactly what constitutes a call, and this is to be altogether expected from the nature of the situation” (Wise, 1958, p. 11). Because of its complexities, the goal of this chapter is to give an overall understanding of call and provide a more specific definition

in light of the biblical examples of call and the history of call for this research project.

This begins with some general definitions of call.

A Variety of Definitions of Call

I begin with a few general definitions of call as proposed by other theologians and scholars. In his book, *What Does God Want Me to Do? Understanding and Responding to Calling*, Joe Collins (2013), presents his definition of call:

Calling is a directive from God to a particular task or state of being. For most people, it is not a one-time event, but an ongoing conversation with God marked by a series of events, realizations, holy moments, etc. that help them understand His will. The exact nature and combinations of these experiences vary from one person to the next and may include revelations from God, observations of the world, and/or discoveries of self. (p. 25)

Collins offers an open definition of calling, beginning with a foundational aspect of call, that of it being from God. Collins's definition leaves call open to the special and specific experience of the individual. Edward Hayes (2000), writes, "A call of God is a sovereign act with immediate or temporal significance. It also may carry with it eternal intention" (p. 91). In this definition, the focus is also on call beginning from God and the importance of such an experience. Gordan MacDonald (2003) offers his definition as he writes, "A call story is a history of 'whispered words and events' that capture the soul and make you aware that God is speaking" (MacDonald, 2003, p. 37). For MacDonald, a call story is not just about one experience or ah-ha moment, but an evolution of "words and events" in one's life. Carroll Wise (1958), offers her definition, specifically of a call to ministry, "The call to the ministry is not a matter of fact; it is a theological interpretation of a complex constellation of processes and experiences in the life of a

person” (p. 11). Once again, call is viewed as a combination of experiences, rather than one monumental experience. Wise also incorporates the idea of interpretation into her definition, bringing to light that call even though given by God is interpreted by people situated in different contexts. These are four examples of contemporary definitions of call. Though these definitions are varied, they offer insight in to the words, phrases, and images used to define the complex concept of call.

An entity of call that also needs to be discussed in the beginning of this exploration is response. Even though the Christian concept of God’s call originates with God, it also entails receiving and responding on behalf of the called. As Collins (2003) writes, “When I talk about calling, I can’t artificially separate being from doing” (Collins, 2013, p. 164). The call of God is an action, requiring an active response. This response is often one that goes against the norms of society and thought. As MacDonald (2003) writes, “Once you are called, financial security, location, notoriety, applause, and power become increasingly less important. Obedience becomes the primary issue” (p. 37). A call from God requires a response. This response, like the call itself is sacred, personal, and varied, but an important aspect of the call.

Defining call within a Christian context is difficult because of the complex and complicated nature of God and God’s communication with God’s people. Many definitions of call exist, formally and informally; this, coupled with the sharing of diverse experiences and responses, complicates its definition. According to Collins (2013), “calling is somewhat difficult to research because the definition of it is illusive in our present culture” (p. 10). Understanding and defining call is difficult because its

definition and understanding have evolved throughout history and will continue to do so. However, a basis for understanding call is be formed by looking at call experiences in the Bible.

Biblical Understanding of Call

The Bible is the first source to study when seeking to understand God's call. The Bible is cherished throughout Christian tradition as a revelation of God for God's people. Joe Collins (2013) argues the existence of holy scriptures is evidence that God reveals Himself and speaks to His followers (p. 14). The Bible helps us to understand God and God's work in the world and through people. According to Collins (2013), "The Bible pictures God as a deity who is actively involved in the lives of individuals and nations, extending a call to obedience to those who would seek to have relationship with Him" (Collins, 2013, p. 16). Because of this, the Bible is an important source for examples of God's call because these examples help us to better define and comprehend God's call. As MacDonald (2003) writes, "The Bible is riddled with stories about calls to men and women who, when summoned to service, went out and marked their generation in a particular way" (p. 25). To better reflect on call as presented in the Bible, I will share some examples of God's call in the lives of individuals in the Old Testament and New Testament and present common elements in these call experiences found the Bible.

Old Testament

The Old Testament includes stories of people called and commanded by God and stories of their responses. The following is an in-depth look at a few of these stories:

Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Samuel, Jonah, and women of the Old Testament. These examples give us insight into the call of God and how people respond.

Abraham. One example of call in the Bible is the story of Abraham. Abraham is called by God to go to another country.

Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. (Genesis, 12:1-5, NRSV)

Abraham is told by God to go and he goes. Per Temba Mafico (2006–2007), “Abraham was, therefore, called to minister to his own household so that future generations would follow Yahweh” (Mafico, 2006–2007, p. 13). The call is followed by a response. “It is important to note that Yahweh’s commission to Abraham was quite specific. God called Abraham to separate from his kinsfolk and to go to a land that Yahweh would show him” (Mafico, 2006–2007, p. 13). From this text, we assume Abram hears the audible voice of God, as the scripture says, “Now the Lord said to Abram” (Genesis 12:1, NRSV). Later in Abraham’s story we read of another command from God.

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.’ So Abraham arose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. (Genesis 22:1-3, NRSV)

While this command from God to Abraham is hard to read, especially for parents, Abraham listens and obeys. Once again, this seems to be the audible voice of God speaking to Abraham, a voice Abraham most likely recognizes from his previous communications with God. The story continues as Abraham build an altar, prepares the wood, and binds his son, Isaac, to be sacrificed. As Abraham takes up his knife, an angel of the Lord speaks:

But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.’ And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. (Genesis 22:11-14, NRSV)

In this instance, an angel of the Lord calls to Abraham to save Isaac, using the same format as God had uses in the beginning, “Abraham, Abraham!” While we can explore the many facets of theology in this passage, for the sake of this project, we focus on God’s call. God calls Abraham to a new land and he goes. God calls Abraham to make a seemingly impossible sacrifice and he is willing. God speaks and an angel of God speaks. The calls are clear and specific. The calls require response from Abraham. These calls also impact others, not just Abraham. While God calls Abraham specifically, obedience to God’s call impacts Abraham’s family. Abraham’s call experiences show the call is clearly from God, the call is for specific tasks, the call requires commitment and sacrifice, and the call is followed by a response. Abraham is just one example of the calling of God in the Bible.

Moses. Another well-known call story found in Exodus in the Old Testament is the story of Moses:

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' He said further, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:1–6, NRSV)

Moses is going about his normal duties, watching a flock, when he experiences a call from God (Mafico, 2006–2007, p. 20). An angel speaks to him and then the Lord speaks to him from a burning bush. As the conversation with God continues, Moses doubts and questions God's call, but responds as God asks. God also performs signs for Moses, including turning a staff into a snake (Exodus 4:1-5), leprosy on and off his hands (Exodus 4:4-7), and turning water into blood (Exodus 4:8-9). When Moses gives the excuse of limited speaking abilities, God provides Aaron to help (Exodus 4:10-17). According to Mafico (2006-2007), "When Moses was called to liberate the Israelites, he had demonstrated passion for his people and had acquired good education. But he did not know the way, nor did he have the practical skills to lead people through the desert" (p. 19). Moses is somewhat prepared for the call, but not fully qualified. However, he receives the call, and responds. The call is specific and clear and God continues to speak to Moses after the bush incident. God does not call and disappear. Though doubtful at

first, after continued affirmation and signs from God, Moses responds. Moses is not called to do this task alone, but is given Aaron to help. This initial experience with the burning bush is followed by other instances of God calling and commanding Moses. God's call is not always a one-time event, but a continuous communication with God and in response to God. Moses is an example of God's call and continued presence.

Gideon. Another example of the call of God in the Bible is found in the story of Gideon. "Gideon lived at a time when the Israelites were overwhelmed by the Midianites. They had no freedom to do anything without being menaced by them" (Mafico, 2006-2007, p. 14). The Israelites plead to God for help and Gideon is the one called by God to help defeat the Midianites and free the Israelites.

Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior." (Judges 6:11–12)

Gideon, unlike Abraham, responds with some questions and doubts. But the Lord continues to command Gideon to deliver Israel from the Midianites and promises to be with Gideon. Gideon asks God for a sign. Gideon prepares a goat and unleavened bread.

The angel of the God said to him "Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes, and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of the Lord vanished from sight. (Judges 6:20–21, NRSV)

After this sign, Gideon knows it is the Lord and builds an alter to God. God continues to speak to Gideon, and Gideon asks for more signs. The Lord is in constant communication with Gideon, in what seems like an audible voice. God calls and uses Gideon, seemingly because of his qualifications. It seems his trust and reliance on God are not his best assets, as he continues to need reassurance of God's commands and presence. According to Mafico (2006-2007), "God called Gideon to be a military leader because he possessed military prowess. His divine commission to deliver the Israelites from the Midianite oppression reflected this attribute" (p. 14). Gideon is a mighty warrior and is called by God for a specific battle. God speaks and provides signs in his communication with Gideon. Gideon's call, even though between him and God, does affect the Israelites also. Once again, God's call is followed by a response. Though Gideon's response is a little different from Abraham's, he does obey God and eventually defeats the Midianites.

Samuel. Another famous call story in the Bible is that of Samuel. This call story is probably most often used in reference to God's call.

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if

he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:1-10, NRSV)

Following this, the Lord tells Samuel about the tragedy that is to come to Eli’s family.

The next morning, Eli asks Samuel about what the Lord said, and Samuel tells Eli. As Samuel grows, the Lord continues to be with him and reveal Himself to Samuel. God’s call to Samuel is an audible voice at night. Samuel hears the voice, but does not recognize it as God’s. Eli, a mentor to Samuel, helps Samuel in the process of listening to the call of God. The Lord reveals a hard truth to Samuel, one he probably does not want to hear or share with Eli, but Samuel still responds by sharing the hard truth with Eli. The call of God continues in Samuel’s life. This call experience proves that sometimes we need help and encouragement from other followers of God to discern God’s call, sometimes God calls in ways that are hard to comprehend and hard to hear, and that God’s call continues.

Jonah. One classic Bible story of God’s call that is taught in most Christian traditions to children at an early age is the story of Jonah. While the focus is often placed on Jonah’s unfortunate situation inside a large fish, Jonah’s story is really one of God’s call.

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai, saying, “Go at once to Ninevah, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.” But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. (Jonah 1:1–3, NRSV)

As the story goes, a storm comes up on the sea and Jonah is thrown overboard in an effort by the sailors to get rid of the disobedience to God onboard, thereby hoping to calm the storm. Jonah is swallowed by a large fish and stays in the fish for three days. Jonah prays to the Lord and the fish spits him out on dry land. Then the Lord calls Jonah again to go to Nineveh and Jonah obeys. God's call is clear, but Jonah doesn't like what he hears. He tries to escape God's call, but is unsuccessful. This story like the others can be studied from many different aspects of theology, but our focus is call. God calls, but Jonah does not like the message and seeks to run from the call. God has mercy on Jonah, calls again, and Jonah responds obediently. Sometimes Jonah is looked down on because of his disobedience. However, he is a human being called by God to do a holy work that he does not want to do. His response is human. Jonah shows us an alternative view of response. Ultimately, he responds in obedience, but at first, he runs from the call. In reality, people receive God's call and respond differently. Jonah shows us not all people respond in obedience at first. Jonah also shows us God's call is not always easy and may even be a call to something we dread. Jonah is called to a specific task, out of his comfort zone. Even in reluctant obedience, the task is accomplished and God's will was done.

Old Testament women. The call experiences of women are not as prevalent as those of men in the Old Testament. Their absence reflects the society in which the stories of the Old Testament occur and are written, where women are viewed as second class citizens. Though stories of women called are few and less emphasized, they do exist. Throughout the Old Testament, a few times women prophetesses are mentioned.

Prophets and prophetesses are viewed as called by God. Even though the specific call of God is not mentioned in relation to these women, their title “prophetess,” entails their call to speak and act on behalf of God. Miriam (Exodus 15:20) leads the women in a praise song and dancing after the Israelites cross the Red Sea and are safe from the Egyptians. Huldah (2 Kings 22:14) is a prophetess during the reign of King Josiah. She predicts destruction for the people because of their devotion to other gods. Deborah is the only woman judge mentioned in the Old Testament. She leads her people to victory over an enemy army. Like prophets, judges are viewed as appointed by God. Even though Deborah’s call experience is not written, it is presumed she is chosen by God for the role of judge. Other famous women of the Old Testament include Esther, Rahab, Abigail, and Ruth. Esther becomes Queen and prevents the execution of the Jews. Rahab helps spies hide for Joshua to overtake Jericho, even though it means betraying her own country and putting her life in danger, because she knows the men are of the Lord. Abigail risks her own life to save her people from the wrath of God and the evil of her husband. Ruth makes an unselfish decision to stay with her mother-in-law, even after the death of her husband and father-in-law. She eventually marries Boaz, an honorable man, and their son becomes part of the lineage of David. Though they are not explicitly called, these women did mighty acts for the Lord. They interpret the need to act based on their relationship to God and their abilities within the situations; they respond to God’s call to all God’s people to be a part of God’s work in the world. While the call experiences of these women are not documented in the same way as the men discussed previously, they

are important to understanding the biblical nature of God and God's use of women, even in a time when women were not highly valued by society.

Conclusion. These stories are a sampling of God's call in the Old Testament. Others include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea, about whom we read, "the word of the Lord came." For Isaiah, the call includes a call to be sanctified (Mafico, 2006–2007, p. 25). For Jeremiah, it is evident God is at work in his calling to be a prophet before he is even born (Mafico, 2006–2007, p. 27). Ezekiel is called to be a watchman. Hosea is called to preach. The call narratives of Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Samuel, Jonah, women of the Old Testament and others allow us insight into the call of God. These Old Testament stories often provide large narratives to read and explore to uncover a better understanding of complexities of God's call. The New Testament also provides examples of God's call.

New Testament

The New Testament offers some specific stories of call and provides understanding for the call of Christians to be disciples of Christ. The call story of John the Baptist, Jesus' call to the first disciples, Paul's call experience, and a few stories of women are found in the New Testament. The New Testament also reveals more of the call language in relation to how Christians are called to live as followers of Christ.

John the Baptist. John the Baptist is born a short time before Jesus. John is sent to prepare the way for Jesus and proclaim of the coming of the Messiah. This call from God occurs before John is even born. In the gospel of Mark, we find part of the story of John,

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare the way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’” John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:1–4, NRSV)

God’s call on John’s life is present even before he is born. Prophets foretell of his birth and purpose, and John fulfills that with his life. In Luke we read the story of an angel appearing to John’s father before his birth,

Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the lord.” (Luke 1:11–17, NRSV)

An angel appears to Zechariah to tell him of the upcoming birth of his son. This is important because Elizabeth is barren; therefore, she and Zechariah do not think they can have children. Not only did the angel reveal Elizabeth is pregnant, but reveals what God is going to do in and through their son, John. God’s call on John’s life happens before he is even born. This call is shared through the prophets for the people of God and through an angel directly with his parents. Later in Chapter 3 of Luke we read of John proclaims baptism and repentance of sins. It is not stated, but I assume John’s parents are vital in helping him live out his call, as they share stories of the angel that appeared to tell of his

birth and nurture him for God's call and purpose. There is a specific call and a response. John responds with his life, by being the one to prepare the way and point people toward the Messiah, Jesus.

First disciples. In the New Testament, we also read of Jesus' calling of the first disciples.

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people!” Immediately, they left their nets and followed him. As they went from there, he saw two other brothers, James, son of Zebedee, and his brother, John, in the boat with their father, Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. (Matthew 4:18–22, NRSV)

Versions of this story are also found in Mark 1:16-34, and in Luke 5:1–11. This story is often referred to as, “the calling of the first disciples.” Jesus invites these men to “follow me,” and they follow, immediately. Jesus uses the language of their trade to explain the specific task he is calling them to. The call is clear and specific, to be fishers of men. The call requires action and sacrifice (for example, leaving their family and business). Though the call is between Jesus and these first disciples, the response affects the larger community of these disciples' families and businesses. Jesus's call of these first disciples influences our ideas of God's call. Often this story is used to show how Christians are all called to follow Christ. This story also points to the idea that some are called to specific tasks and/or ministries within the Church.

Saul. Saul's (also known as Paul) call experience with God is very well known within Christian tradition. Saul is first famous for persecuting Christians. This all

changes after he has a life-changing experience with the presence of Christ. Here is part of Saul's story, found in Acts:

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, who you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." (Acts 9:1–20, NRSV)

While Saul's experience is the one most often spoken of and studied in this passage, it is important to note that Ananias also has an encounter with God. Saul's experience is a dramatic and undeniable encounter with Christ. The Lord speaks to Saul and Saul responds. However, the Lord also calls Ananias to minister to Saul. Saul is called by

God to turn his life in a different direction. Ananias is called to help Saul in responding to the call of God. What if Ananias had not responded to God's call? How would that have changed Saul's call experience? The duality of these call experiences reveals to us the importance of understanding that God's call is personal for everyone and that as individuals we can help others in responding to their own calling. Saul's call also shows God's call is unique and sometimes doesn't make sense to people. No one expects Saul, a man known for his harsh treatment of Christians, to be a leader of the early church.

New Testament women. Jesus's life embodies an affirmation of women as called by God and important to ministry. Mary is chosen by God to give birth to the Savior, Jesus Christ. Luke 1:26-38 says,

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail." "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. (NRSV)

Mary is called to a huge task, to be the mother of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. She responds to the call with an overwhelming willingness. The prophetess Anna is the first

to announce the birth of Jesus at the temple (Luke 2:36-38). As Cunningham (2000) writes, “This wasn’t a quiet word behind the scenes but was a public proclamation in the central place of worship. In fact, it was a defining moment in Christian history” (p. 57). Anna’s involvement in the dedication of Jesus was a big step for women and the Christian faith in relation to the role of women in ministry. Jesus affirms women involved in the spreading of the Gospel by sharing his identity with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). “In the New Testament, the first evangelist to carry the Good News outside Jewish culture was the Samaritan woman who Jesus met at the well” (Cunningham, 2000, p. 63). Then on the famous resurrection day, women are the first to find the empty tomb and go to tell others. “Women were the first to proclaim the Good News of the Resurrection. Women went to the tomb, found it empty, and ran to tell the other disciples” (Cunningham, 2000, p. 64). Women are part of the ministry of the Gospel as the church is formed, for example, Phoebe. Cunningham (2000) writes,

Look at the word servant in Romans 16:1 describing Phoebe’s office. It is *diakonos* in the Greek. Almost everywhere in the New Testament, *diakonos* is translated as ‘minister.’ The word is used to describe a minister of the Gospel. Phoebe was a key leader of the church in Cenchrea. (p. 53)

These specific women are just a few who are summoned and used by God to do God’s work in the world. They are not leaders in the eyes of others of their time, but they are called, gifted, and qualified in the eyes of God. These women are called to minister to the needs of humankind on behalf of God and they respond to that call. Though the examples of women called in the New Testament are small in relation to the examples of

men called, their stories are important for understanding God's use of women for the ministry of Christ and the work of the Christian church.

Call for believers to follow. Besides these specific stories of call, the call language was used throughout the New Testament in referring to the call for believers to follow Christ by the living of their lives in response to Christ's love and sacrifice. In 1 John 3:1 it says we are children of God; "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be children of God; and that is what we are" (NRSV). 1 Timothy 6:11-13 calls followers to standards of life and faith,

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NRSV)

1 Corinthians 1:2 calls followers in Corinth to be holy together; "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours" (NRSV). The New Testament also includes passages about spiritual gifts (Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Ephesians 4:7-16). These passages list different gifts and encourage believers to use their gifts for the building of the kingdom of God. The idea of calling in the New Testament is not just for specific times and specific tasks, as are many of the call stories in the Old Testament. Call in the New Testament focuses on God's call for all to follow Christ and be a part of Christ's work in the world.

According to Collins (2013), "Although there are few exceptions, call or called in the Bible usually refers to the invitation of the Gospel. It is a summons to participate in the

kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ and to be holy, set apart from the surrounding world” (p. 16). This idea of call does not require special revelation or special instruction, even though the possibility of calls for specific tasks still exists, this concept of call is tied to a follower’s choice to believe in Christ and receive salvation. The New Testament call also includes more of an idea of community. God’s call is to be lived out within the fellowship of other believers.

Commonalities of Call in the Bible

These instances of call in the Old and New Testaments help in understanding the larger narrative of God’s call. From these examples, there are some common themes that abound: (a) the call comes from God, (b) God’s call is unpredictable and unique, (c) God’s call compels a response, and (d) although God’s call is to one person, it has consequences beyond the person called.

All calls in the Bible come from God. Per Macdonald (2003), “No one in the Bible anointed himself or herself” (p. 35). The examples of call in the Bible are initiated by God. God gets the attention of the one being called in some way to communicate God’s commands. Though God reveals Godself to people in many ways—audible, angels, signs, through people—the call is always recognized to be from God.

Secondly, God’s call is unpredictable and unique. In the Old Testament, especially, God’s call includes “seemingly impossible objectives” (MacDonald, 2003, p. 36). Abraham is called to be the father of all nations and asked to sacrifice his own son. Moses is called by a burning bush to lead a nation out of Egypt, a nation of enslaved people under the reign of a powerful leader. Gideon is called to be a mighty warrior and

received affirmation in signs. Samuel is called in the middle of the night and revealed difficult things. Jonah is called to go to Nineveh and was swallowed by a big fish. John is called as a baby in his mother's womb to prepare the way for Christ. Saul, a persecutor of Christians, is called to lead the early church by being made blind for three days. According to MacDonald (2003), "No call seems like any other" (p. 26). God calls people to difficult and seemingly crazy tasks and in unique and unpredictable ways. As Karen Mosby-Avery (2007) describes, "At varied points on our life journey, we may experience kairos moments that pull us away from life as we know it and propel us toward unimagined possibilities" (p. 10). Kairos moments are moments that occur at just the right time or moments that occur at specific times to get our attention. These kairos moments are often unpredictable. During Old Testament, there are times the word of the Lord is common, but nothing is common about the ways the Lord called and the things God called God's people to do. The call of God seldom keeps people where they are in their lives and circumstances, but asks them to go, to do, and to change.

Third, God's call always compels a response. Granted, for some, like Jonah, the initial response is contrary to God's call. And for others, like Gideon, the response comes after more affirmation from God. However, God's call gives people the courage to respond, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. The first disciples are called to follow. This call requires them to leave what they are doing and follow Christ. God's call in the New Testament requires believers to follow and respond with the living of their lives. According to Wise (1958), "In any experiences which can be interpreted as a

call, there is always a decision” (p. 12). God’s call for individuals in the Bible requires a response by the individual.

Lastly, God’s call has consequences beyond just the person called. Abraham’s call affects his entire family. Moses’s call effects an entire nation. Samuel’s call experience effects Eli. The calling of the first disciples affects their families and businesses. The call of God on the lives of followers of Christ permeates every facet of their lives. Even when God called one person to a specific task, the response to the call had effects beyond the person called. These four themes arise out of an exploration of call stories and experiences in the Old and New Testaments.

The Bible is a holy work full of stories of God at work in the world in and through people. According to Collins, “The Bible is full of examples of God beckoning and communicating His will” (Collins, 2013, p. 12). These examples of the call stories and others that are not shared are diverse, but share commonalities. The call experiences in the Bible help us to better understand the nature of God’s call and response to God’s call. The revelation of God’s call in the Bible and personal call experiences beyond biblical texts shape the Christian understandings of call throughout history.

Historical Understandings of Call

The idea of God’s call, based on biblical examples of call and individual experiences beyond the Bible, has developed over time. The history of the Christian understanding of call is rich and diverse (Collins, 2013, p. 11). This section of the chapter focuses on the evolution of call throughout history, specifically the early church, Middle Ages, Reformation, and Post Christian Age.

Early Church

The early church's view of call was greatly influenced by its place in time, history, and society. The beginnings of Christianity were characterized by bold followers and persecution. Answering the call to be a Christian was dangerous in this time (Collins, 2013, p. 17). According to Collins (2013), in the beginning of the Christian church the "primary understanding of call had to do with commitment to the faith in light of ongoing persecution" (p. 17). The focus of call for the early Christians was the call to be fully committed to Christ, first because the Christian belief and movement were new and needed commitment from its followers to grow, and second, because the persecution of Christians was so commonplace, leaders had to focus on commitment despite life circumstances. This call to commitment was evident in the Gospels as well as other books in the New Testament that were written for the first generation of Christians. Jesus himself shows the consequences of persecution in his arrest, mocking, trial, and death on the cross. Paul spends much of his writing encouraging and commanding early followers of Christ to stay devoted to Christ and grow in their commitment to Christ. As the persecution of Christians grew, "The called were those who remained faithful, who stayed the course, and who fought the good fight when the entire world persecuted them" (Collins, 2013, p. 18). Because of this focus on commitment, the early church had several famous martyrs, people who lost their lives because of their commitment to Christ. Ignatius of Antioch, Perpetua, and Gregory of Nyssa were a few of the early church martyrs (Collins, 2013, p. 18). Martyrdom was seen as a sign of ultimate commitment to Christ. While not all were called to be martyrs, all were called to live

committed to Christ to the fullest, without worry of possible destruction or death. Because the emphasis was on commitment, there was very little distinction between clergy and laity in the early church. All believers were called to commit to Christ and serve the kingdom of Christ. The kingdom of God was embodied in all of God's creation. While there were, some appointed as apostles, these appointments were based on giftedness and areas of service, not a hierarchy of leadership or position (Hayes, 2000, p. 94). The early church's idea of call was focused on God's call for all believers to fully commit to Christ, follow Christ, and serve Christ. The Christian church was new and had lost the living presence of its Messiah, Jesus, so these early followers needed encouragement to remain committed. Christians were also being persecuted, so commitment was important for continuing the faith despite the harsh circumstances.

Middle Ages

As the persecution of Christians subsided in the middle ages, a different definition of call evolved. It was during this time the idea of differing levels of call and extreme responses to call came to the forefront. According to Collins (2013), "To live a holy life, the Christian had to leave the world and turn his back on anything that might disrupt his relationship to God" (p. 19). Due to the focus on sacrificing the things of this world, self-denial practices arose. Because of self-denial practices and the extreme personalities that personified these practices, there came to be a split in the understanding of call. Call came to mean a special calling beyond the standard commitment. "A vocation was a call to a holy life, separate not only from pagans, but also the ordinary Christians. The proper response to a calling was the total commitment of all that one was and had to the Church"

(Collins, 2013, p. 21). Benedict was one of the people who personified the middle age ideal of call. Benedict lived out his faith in solitude with strict standards. He eventually became famous for writing the Benedictine Rule which became the standard for monastic life and communities. The Benedictine Rule “involved the renunciation of all personal material possessions; a strict daily schedule of prayer, study, and manual labor; complete submission to the leader of the monastery; and lifelong commitment” (Collins, 2013, pp. 20–21). This idea of call separated the normal Christ follower called to commit to a life of faith in the world, from the Christ follower called to commit to a life of faith by abandoning the desires of the world and living apart from the world. Often those called to such a commitment were seen as better than those who were not. As this definition of call arose, not all were comfortable with its divisiveness. Collins (2013) writes,

Karl Barth believed that the creation of a separated clergy in the medieval Church created the greatest schism in the history of Christianity. It did irreparable damage in that the bulk of the Church became second class Christians without a calling, and the Church hierarchy institutionalized this devaluation of the common Christian. (p. 21)

While God’s call in the early church was a call to commitment for all Christians, call in the middle ages came to mean something that separated the normal Christian from the extremely committed. As the middle age idea of calling grew, there became more distinction between the call of individual believers and clergy. However, the reformation sought to remedy this distinctive nature of call.

Reformation

The time of the Protestant Reformation brought much change in the tradition of the Christian church. As individual believers became disillusioned with the Catholic Church, many began to “reform” Christian theology and church practice. Along with this reformation, came another reform in the understanding of call. Martin Luther and John Calvin are known for fighting against the medieval notion of calling. They fought against the idea of the second-class Christian that had begun to form with the elevation of those called to be clergy or live monastic lives. “Luther argued that each member of the Church was a priest in equal spiritual standing with all other priests before God” (Collins, 2013, p. 22). Reformation theologians used Bible passages focused on different spiritual gifts working within one body of believers to defend their position. In their minds, one gift was never elevated over another; therefore, no call should be elevated over another. This is where the idea of the priesthood of the believer was birthed, a foundational idea for the Baptist faith. Calvin further influenced the changing definition of call by advocating for two kinds of call—a general call for all believers to follow Christ and a special call unique to the individual (Collins, 2013, p. 22). The general call for all was the call to salvation. The special call was more specific based on giftedness and in relation to service for Christ in the world. According to Wise (1958), “there is no discrimination of status to be given to various forms of Christian service, that they each are informed by the same Spirit for the common good, that all members are of equal importance in the Christian community” (p. 9). Much of this change in understanding of God’s call was also influenced by the changes in society. In the middle ages, people had

little choice in their work. During the time of the reformation, people were given more personal choice when it came to jobs. This openness to new opportunities challenged people to think about what God would want them to do (Collins, 2013, p. 22). As society and church changed, the definition of call evolved with the changes. These changes opened God's call –general and special—to all. However, the idea of call was constantly tied to the salvation in and service for Christ.

Post-Christian

The post-Christian age in relation to calling is informed by William Placher's understanding of call which is written about by Joe Collins in *What Does God Want Me to Do?: Understanding and Responding to Calling*. The post-Christian age is a time that exists after the formation to now. For Placher, while a dominant understanding of call within Christian tradition existed during the early church, middle ages, and reformation time periods, it is hard to find such a dominant definition following the reformation (Collins, 2013, p. 24). The reformation opened the door for diverse interpretations and practices of theology. The Industrial Revolution changed the way people viewed work. Developments in psychology invited people to reflect on inward and outside forces for the purpose of knowing oneself (Collins, 2013, p. 24). Modern changes in society, for example the access to information and the ability to travel, and the knowledge of different cultures and religious practices, opened the world to differing views and definitions of call. All of these changes in society, practice, and thought had an effect on the idea and understanding of call and even the language used to talk about call. "Over time, new words came to dominate our vocabulary. Words like vision, being led, gifted,

and passion. Less heard is: ‘God clearly called me’” (MacDonald, 2003, p. 38). In the post-Christian age, the understanding of call is not limited to a Christian understanding. The idea and language of call are used in a variety of realms; therefore, a single dominant understanding of call is almost impossible to articulate.

The definition and understanding of call has evolved throughout history due to changes in society and the climate of Christian theology and practice. Understanding the history of call within Christian tradition is important in studying the call experiences of Baptist women in ministry. Understanding biblical and historical aspects of call also helps me understand how my personal understanding of call has been formed.

Personal Understanding of Call

My personal idea of call, based on biblical examples, historical understandings and personal experience is best described by George W. Peters in his article, *The Call of God*. Peters argues for a threefold idea of call: call to salvation, call to discipleship, and call to ministry of the word. This idea of call best captures my personal understanding of call in relation to life, ministry, and this research project.

Peters describes the first element of call as the call to salvation. For Peters (1963), “The call to salvation is fundamental to every other call of God. It is first in emphasis and time, and first in experience. It is primary” (p. 323). This first call is a summons to all. For Peters (1963), this call “comes in the form of invitations, promises, and commands” (p. 322). This call is an invitation by the Holy Spirit, based on the promises of God and including commands such as “repent, believe, commit, trust, return, and be converted” (Peters, p. 1963, pp. 322–323). God calls people to believe and

commit to Christ. God continually summons God's people. This call, like the examples from the Bible, requires a response. God does not force people to connect and believe; God calls and allows individuals the right to choose and respond. The call to salvation is the first call of God. This call is God's first summons to come and follow. It is a call because it seeks response, but that response is based on the choice of the individual. The call to salvation is foundational to believers because it is an invitation to commune with God. The call to salvation leads to a call to discipleship.

The second call, a call to discipleship, is linked to the first. "Christian discipleship is a Biblical ideal to which every Christian is called" (Peters, 1963, p. 323). The call to salvation is a call to believe in Christ and commit to Christ. The call to discipleship is a call to live a life for Christ. The call to salvation is based on the idea of Christ as Savior, the saving grace for our sinfulness. The call to discipleship is based on the idea of Christ as Lord, reigning over one's life. For Peters,

A disciple is a believing person living a life of conscious and constant identification with the Lord in life, death, and resurrection through words, behavior, attitudes, motives, and purpose, fully realizing Christ's absolute ownership of his life, joyfully embracing the Saviorhood of Christ, delighting in the Lordship of Christ and living by abiding, indwelling resources of Christ according to the imprinted pattern and purpose of Christ for the chief end of glorifying his Lord and Savior. (Peters, 1968, p. 327)

The call to discipleship requires dedication of self and life. A disciple is a devoted follower of Christ and that devotion is to be evident, not just to God and to self, but also to others. Discipleship is a call that continues through a person's life. While the call to salvation is the beginning, discipleship is the continuous call of God to grow in Christ.

Living a Christian life is a process; discipleship is the means to that process. A call to discipleship is a constant call to live for Christ. The call to discipleship is answered as believers choose to learn and grow in Christ. The call includes a call to fellowship with Christ and others, openness to God, obedience to Christ, service, and sacrifice (Peters, 1968, p. 327). When the first disciples are called to follow, it is a lifetime commitment. They travel with Christ, learn from Christ, and serve with Christ. Throughout their lives and ministry, they grow in their understanding of Christ and faith in Christ. Just as those first disciples are called to follow with their lives, believers are called to dedicate their lives to learning, growing and serving Christ; discipleship is that process and calling.

Third, Peters writes of a call to the ministry of the word. According to Peters (1968), “the call to the ministry of the Word is selective, personal and specific” (p. 328). Whereas the call to discipleship is similar for all believers, the call to the ministry of the word is more specific to individual believers. God calls individuals to share the word of Christ with the world in different and unique ways. We are not all called to minister the same in the world. This call is related to giftedness and need. While the Bible is not definite in God’s call to specific careers, it is evident he uses a variety of people in different ways to minister to the world. Dan Kimball (2013) writes,

For some it might be serving on a church staff. For others, the calling might be serving as a full-time mom or a plumber or an engineer. Each of these is a sacred calling. We all interact with other human beings, and we all represent Jesus. We are all called into a sacred vocation. We’re all on mission. (Kimball, 2013, para. 1)

The call to the ministry of the word allows for all Christians to share the same mission, of sharing the word of Christ with the world, through different avenues. For Peters there are three principle ways to minister—evangelism, shepherding the flock, and teaching (Peters, 1968, p. 331). Evangelism focuses on sharing the message of the gospel of Christ and sharing the call of salvation to unbelievers. Shepherding the flock focuses on caring for the fellowship of believers. Teaching focuses on teaching the history and principles of the faith found in scripture. These are not the only ways to minister; however, many facets of ministry fall under one of these three categories. Within these ways to minister, there is freedom and opportunity for all believers to serve Christ. The call to the ministry of the word is a call to be active in the work of Christ in the world. This call is special and unique for individual believers. The call to the ministry of the word is a call to be a part of God's redemptive work.

George Peters best describes my personal understanding of God's call. First, all are called first to salvation, to believe in Christ as Messiah and Savior. Secondly, all believers are called to discipleship, to devote their lives to learning and growing in Christ. Finally, all believers are called to the ministry of the word. The ministry of the word is a specific and individual call related to being part of God's work in the world. The call of God is a summons to commune with Christ; however, this summons is not mandated. Each individual chooses how he or she will respond to the call of God. This three-fold philosophy of call best outlines my personal understanding of God's call.

Call to Professional Ministry

A general understanding of God's call is important for this study; however, it is also important to explore the specific ideal of a call to professional ministry. My understanding of a specific call to ministry is based on the idea that all Christians are called to serve and my growing understanding of vocation. The section is not complete without mentioning the challenges of call for Baptist women ministers.

All Called to Serve

My personal understanding of calling to professional ministry begins with the premise that all are called to serve. This concept is greatly influenced by my Baptist theology of the priesthood of the believer and my understanding of the three-fold call. I believe all believers are called by God to follow Christ, to grow in Christ, to share the message of Christ, and to serve Christ. While the specific call of God may be different for all, the purpose is the same. According to Hudson (1962), "All Christians are called to bear witness to Christ, to testify to the forgiveness they have found, to pray for one another and to give themselves in loving service to their neighbors" (p. 238). All Christians are called to serve Christ in the world. No service is better or higher than another. As Kimball writes,

When we label only career pastors as 'called,' what does that say about all those in the church who also have pastoral gifts? They may be using their pastoral gifts to lead a mid-week Bible study or to shepherd people in a small group. But they are 'called' differently than the one who does it all week as a job. (Kimball, 2013, para. 3)

When we create a hierarchy of service, we neglect different gifts and areas of service. According to Hayes (2000), “ministry is neither an option for believers nor a special class of believers” (p. 97). Essentially, ministry is a part of the Christian life to be shared by all. Therefore, being a minister or doing ministry does not make an individual believer better than another. The early church did not have “professional ministers” as they exist today. Similar to professional ministers, there were apostles and leaders within regions assigned to different tasks to continue to share the message of Christ and to care for the fellowship of believers. Throughout history, professional ministry has taken different forms. The evolution of the idea of work has had a profound effect on professional ministry. As the idea of work in the Western world has evolved from something that is assigned to a career that is chosen, vocation has come to be an important aspect of understanding call and ministry.

Vocation

A great understanding of God’s call is gained from Parker Palmer’s understanding of vocation. Palmer is not a Baptist; however, his understanding of vocation aligns easily with the Baptist ideal of soul freedom and the movement of God in the lives of people. Palmer explores the idea of vocation in his book, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. Palmer explores vocation as a general call for all people to find their purpose in life. Palmer says vocation begins with listening. A vocation is not a goal, but a part of who we are as individuals (Palmer, 2000, p. 4). For Palmer (2000), “Vocation does not come from a voice ‘out there’ calling me to become something I am not. It comes from a voice ‘in here’ calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the

original selfhood given me at birth by God” (p. 10). This more contemporary idea of vocation differs from many Biblical instances of call which included the audio outward voice of God. If this is true with all vocations, it is also true for vocational ministry. Responding to the call to vocational ministry is a called person’s way of listening and fulfilling God’s purpose for his or her life. “Vocation at its deepest level is, ‘This is something I can’t not do, for reasons I’m unable to explain to anyone else and don’t fully understand myself but that are nonetheless compelling’” (Palmer, 2000, p. 25). Vocation is more than a career or work. The idea of vocation is work that embraces a person’s innermost self-hood. I, like Kimball (2013), “encourage everyone to see their vocation as a sacred calling,” not just ministers (para. 4). Vocation and Parker Palmer’s insights on vocation aid in the understanding of call, including those called to vocational ministry.

Call to Professional Ministry

In reference to previous mentioned understandings of call, the call to professional ministry is one vocation related to God’s call to salvation, discipleship, and ministry. A call to professional ministry is an individual and church responsibility.

The call to professional ministry is a specific call of a believer by God to do the work of ministry in a professional capacity. This call, like Biblical examples of call from God is unique, requires a response, and has consequences beyond the called. According to Hayes (2000),

A special call of God to ministry may be understood as divine intervention in the life and work of an individual, pointing in some specific direction consistent with His will. This special call is marked by an overpowering sense of God’s leading and authority. Those called in this way testify to their reluctance to accept the call, and they often speak of their feelings of unworthiness. Yet those who attest

to a special call often display boldness and confidence in God's power in their lives. (p. 93)

The call to professional ministry is experienced by an individual believer. It is from God for the specific purpose of ministry as a career. This call may be experienced differently by individuals. This call is marked by an "ah-ha" moment, a process of discovering God's call, or a combination of the two. The call to professional ministry, like the call experiences in the Bible, requires a response. Some respond positively, others with questions and doubts. The call to professional ministry does not just affect the individual called, but also has consequences for friends, family, and churches. The call to serve in professional ministry is specific and unique to the individual in experience, details, and response. However, the call to professional ministry is not a better calling than the call to be a teacher or accountant. The call to professional ministry is a specific revelation and response to God's call for all believers to serve and minister in the world. The call of God to professional ministry is personal; however, the call to professional ministry cannot be lived out without the opportunity to serve within a community.

H. Richard Niebuhr writes of a providential call and an ecclesiastical call. The providential call is the individual call of a person to do the work of ministry. The ecclesiastical call is the invitation by a community of believers for an individual to engage in ministry work (Howe, 1980, p. 3). Call to professional ministry is a personal experience; however, the church has a great responsibility when it comes to the call to professional ministry. Churches and religious organizations are an integral part of professional ministry. Churches and Christian organizations provide spaces and

opportunities for the vocation of ministry. Churches and organizations are also given the task of affirming the ministry work of professional ministry. Formal affirmation is most often done through the process of ordination. Hudson (1962) writes, “In church life, to ordain is to appoint and to formally install an individual in a specific office, and to authorize him thereby to assume certain responsibilities on behalf of the other members of the church” (p. 240). In the context of most churches, ordination is reserved for the offices of deacon and minister. Ordination is a process of setting apart for a specific ministry. Churches provide space for professional ministers to serve in their vocation and also provide encouragement through the act of ordination. However, as Howe (1980) writes, “The local church should become more active not only in calling out the called but in nurturing, clarifying, and evaluating the gifts of the called in light of the person’s abilities, the church’s mission, and the world’s needs” (p. 12). The call to professional ministry is personal, but it is also ecclesiastical. The call to professional ministry involves having a place to serve and being affirmed for the vocation of ministry. Churches need to grow in their understanding of God’s call and in their responsibility of nurturing those called to professional ministry. The need for churches to better understand and nurture the call to professional ministry, especially for Baptist women within the ecclesiastical context, is a primary focus for this specific research project.

Baptist Women Called to Ministry

Ecclesiastic service and affirmation is a challenge for some women in the Baptist tradition. Though many women in the Baptist tradition have experienced the call of God on their lives to serve in professional ministry, for decades they have been denied the

ability to respond to that call within seminaries and the church. According to Amber Cook (2010),

The young and old alike are encouraged to seek God's calling for their lives and to have the courage to act on that calling. At the same time, women in Southern Baptist churches are often refused the opportunity to act on their callings in serving as deacons and pastors, and wives are instructed to submit to their husbands' authority. (p. 189)

While encouraged to listen for God's call, some Baptist women have had difficulty responding to that call. Women have been denied theological education in seminaries, ministerial ordination, and positions in churches. "This denied calling leaves some women uncertain of what it means to be a Christian woman, following God with all her heart yet subject to the confines of Southern Baptist doctrine" (Cook, 2010, p. 204). For this reason, many women of the Southern Baptist tradition have looked elsewhere to respond and live out their call. Some of these women have ignored the call altogether. Others have responded to their call by serving in different forms of ministry. Jennifer Bradshaw (2013) shares her own experience,

I think I always felt a persistent tug toward ministry in the church. When I led Bible study groups and went on Mission trips during high school I sensed that God had gifted me in the areas of teaching and ministry. However, because the Southern Baptist tradition does not embrace the equal gifting of men and women, I never knew exactly where I would fit in ministry. The options that were open to me—children's ministry or mission work—never clicked as the calling God had for me. (para. 3)

Bradshaw's story is evidence of the challenges involved in Baptist women responding to God's call to the vocation of ministry. Sometimes the risks are too much or the doors are

shut too many times. Though response is an integral part of God's call to professional ministry, the reality is, Baptist women are often denied opportunities to respond as God calls within the local church. However, despite denied opportunities, Baptist women continue to respond out of their desire to follow God's call on their lives. They are compelled to respond and the power of the call often overrules the challenges of responding. Further aspect of the history of women within Southern Baptist tradition will be covered in Chapter II.

Personal Definition of Call

My personal definition of call is influenced by the biblical and historical examples and definitions of call. Defining call is important as the purpose of this project is to study how Baptist women ministers experience God's call, how Baptist women ministers respond to God's call, and how Baptist churches and individuals can better nurture God's call for Baptist women called to ministry.

Defining God's call is a difficult task because our understanding of God's call is complex and has evolved throughout history. Defining God's call is also difficult because it is often experienced and communicated by individuals from different backgrounds and perspectives. Defining call is difficult because God's call is experienced within a certain setting and atmosphere, which affects how God's call is experienced, expressed, and lived out. Finally, defining God's call is difficult because we seek to put human words to holy experiences.

I set forth the following working definition of God's call for this dissertation project: **Call is from God for individuals in relation to life choices and/or a specific**

task. All Christians share the call to follow Christ, be growing disciples, and minister in the world. However, the call to minister is different for individuals based on their gifts, personhood, and context. God's call can be experienced in transformative events and small instances; however, call is marked by communication with God and personal interpretation of these holy experiences. God's call requires discernment and response. While God's call is often an individual experience, it has impact beyond the individual called. God's call to ministry is special, unique, and sacred between God and the individual, but is often manifested and lived-out in the larger context of Christian community. For this project, I focus on the call experiences of Baptist women ministers; therefore, the focus is the specific call of Baptist women to professional ministry.

Call is difficult to define because of its complexities; however, biblical and historical understandings of call give a basis for forming a definition for this specific project. This definition is the lens from which call will be explored throughout the research.

Conclusion

God's call has been experienced, explored, and defined throughout history. Biblical examples of call give a basis for understanding how God summons people. Historical understandings of call give an understanding of how the definition of call has changed based on society, experience, and interpretation. My personal understanding of call is best represented by a three-fold call: the call to salvation, the call to discipleship, and the call to minister. Baptist women, specifically in the Southern Baptist tradition,

have faced challenges in responding to God's call to professional ministry. This project seeks to explore the lives of five Baptist women in ministry to gain a better understanding of how Baptist women experience God's call to ministry, how Baptist women respond to God's call to ministry, and how Baptist individuals and Baptist churches can better nurture that call. To fully understand the challenges faced by Baptist women called to professional ministry, it is important to understand the history of women within the Baptist tradition. The following chapter focuses on Baptist history, specifically in relation to the roles of women within the ministry and work of the church.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN IN SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORY

To present any facet of Baptist history is a difficult task because one cannot group all Baptists together. The “Baptist” world and history is vast and diverse. Therefore, for this research project the history is specified to the Southern Baptist tradition. This chapter introduces Baptist beginnings in America, discusses the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention, discusses the roles of women in local churches and the denomination, focuses on where women found places to serve, and introduces the issue ordination for Baptist women and their response to the issue, and the underlying matter of call in relation to Southern Baptist women ministers.

Baptists in America

Understanding the Southern Baptist Convention’s history and tradition begins with understanding the atmosphere in which the Baptist tradition grew out of colonial America. This brief history of Baptist beginnings in America will focus on Roger Williams and the Triennial Convention.

Roger Williams

Roger Williams is known for starting the Baptist movement in the American colonies. Roger Williams was an opinionated and passionate believer, thinker and speaker. Williams held many unpopular beliefs, one being the native people owned the land discovered by the English and should be paid for it (Leonard, 2003, p. 73). This was

not the only thought for which Roger Williams was ostracized. According to Bill Leonard in his work *Baptist Ways: A History* (2003), “Williams entered into debates over whether women should wear veils (he favored it), whether a cross should be on the English flag (he opposed it), and whether non-Christians should swear oaths (he called that blasphemy)” (Leonard, 2003, p. 73). Because of his “refusal to keep his opinions to himself” he was banished from Massachusetts in 1635 (Leonard, 2003, p. 73). After fleeing Massachusetts, Williams sought a place of refuge for himself and others like him. When Williams fled Massachusetts, he went to Rhode Island.

Roger Williams is famous in the Baptist tradition for founding the First Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island in 1636. In the larger scheme of history, Roger Williams is famous for founding the colony of Rhode Island. Religious liberty is what attracted many people to Providence, Rhode Island. Williams disagreed with the idea of a national church and was weary of any government persecution based on religious beliefs. Religious liberty was important to Roger Williams and has remained an important foundation for the Baptist faith and tradition. The irony of Williams’ place in Baptist history is that he is famous for starting the first Baptist church in America, but only remained Baptist for a short while. “With a ‘restless unsatisfiedness’ in his soul, Williams remained with the Baptist for only about four months, concluding that in the cacophony of sects no person had authority to baptize or organize a church” (Leonard, 2003, 75). Despite his short tenure as a Baptist, Roger Williams made a lasting imprint on the Baptist tradition by starting the first organized Baptist church and creating a foundation for the importance of religious liberty.

Baptist beginnings in America were rocky, evident by the first Baptist church's founder leaving only months after his founding of the historic church. "Baptists began in colonial America as a marginalized sect of radical religionists, often exiled, jailed, or otherwise harassed by the prevailing religious establishments" (Leonard, 2003, p. 70). Controversies in thought, belief, and practice divided early Baptists, possibly because of the foundation of religious liberty and the fact all believers had the right to form their own opinions in relation to faith and practice. Although the Baptist tradition struggled in the beginning, by the 19th century "they had become one of the nation's largest denominations" (Leonard, 2003, p. 70). Though Baptists were vast in their beliefs, they were strategic and intentional when it came to their organizations.

Triennial Convention

Many Baptist believers wanted to be a part of something bigger than themselves, so they sought to organize to accomplish shared goals, especially around missions. Many local and regional organizations formed within American Baptist culture. One of the first of these organizations was the Triennial Convention. This convention was formed in an effort to support missionaries, specifically the Judsons. Bill Leonard (2003) writes,

In May 1814, delegates gathered in Philadelphia and formed the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States. Known as the Triennial Convention because of its national meeting every three years, this body assumed support of the Judsons in Burma and establish procedures for sending out other individuals. (p. 165)

Adoniram and Ann Judson were the first Baptist missionaries. Before they were Baptists, they were American Congregationalists missionaries to India (Leonard, 2003, p. 164-

165). Upon their conversion they needed to find support in order to continue their work as missionaries and began to look to the Baptist denomination. They resigned as American Congregationalists missionaries and moved to Burma. Luther Rice, who began the missionary journey with the Judsons under the American Congregationalists, returned to America to look for Baptist support for the Judsons (Leonard, 2003, p. 165). This led to the formation of the Triennial Convention. The Triennial Convention was organized around support for missionaries. It was not based on specific beliefs or practices, except for a belief that the Gospel of Christ should be shared with the entire world. This convention exhibited the importance of missions in Baptist history. While in the beginning, the Triennial Convention focused on mission's support; however, later the convention provided support in other areas including education and publishing. Many other local, regional, and state mission societies began to form following the Triennial Convention for the purpose of resourcing missions and missionaries and educating individuals and churches about God's call to missions. The Baptist boom continued as the Triennial Convention inspired churches and individuals to be involved in missions.

Southern Baptist Convention

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) was formed under the intent to organize a denomination, including mission work, because many Baptists became dissatisfied with the decisions of the Triennial Convention. A better understanding of the Southern Baptist Convention can be gained through understanding its beginnings, growth, controversy and response, and the dissenting organizations that formed out of it.

Southern Baptist Beginnings

While the Triennial Convention was doing great work in missions on behalf of Baptists in America, some Baptist in the south became dissatisfied with the ways of the Triennial Convention and formed the Southern Baptist Convention. Leonard (2003) writes,

Convinced that the mission board had been co-opted by abolitionists and that Southerners were no longer candidates for missionary appointment, a group gathered in First Baptist Church, Augusta, Georgia, on May 8, 1845, and established the Southern Baptist Convention. (p. 189)

However, it is hard to overlook the timing and intent of possible slave owners who wanted to be involved in and support missions but may not have been welcomed or affirmed in the Triennial Convention. The issue of race was not just a Baptist or Christian issue, but an issue that divided America, as evidenced by the Civil War. According to Leonard (2003), “In 1861, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) approved ten resolutions that championed the Southern position” (p. 199). Several well-known and respected Southern Baptist leaders supported slavery, many due to their need for labor for their own businesses and financial gain. This is an atrocious piece of Southern Baptist history, but it is an important piece.

The Southern Baptist Convention was organized because some Baptists did not agree with how things were being done in the Triennial Convention and in other organized Baptist groups. This sentiment of Baptist thought and practice continued to be a part of the Baptist tradition. If someone or a group didn’t agree, they simply formed their own group. While this seems like an ineffective way to organize for the goal of

sharing the Gospel of Christ, without this thought and practice moderate Baptist would not have left to seek their own way over 100 years later.

Growth of the Southern Baptist Convention

Although the Southern Baptist Convention was formed in 1845, the organization of the denomination proved slow, controversial, and complicated. Harry Leon McBeth (1987) writes, “The SBC entered the twentieth century with three general boards, no standing committees, and no continuing commissions” (p. 609). Over the next century, the SBC sought to better organize the denomination. This included annual meetings, the formation of committees, funding, and recruiting, for lack of a better word, local church and individual support. Eventually, the Southern Baptist Convention grew to be a powerhouse denomination. The support of the SBC grew from the southern part of the United States, to all parts of the United States. This growth did not come without growing pains. Issues arose around representation in the convention, including leadership on committees and messengers at the annual meeting. Social issues also began to influence the expanding denomination. Issues in society in the 1960s; including the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War controversy, the sexual revolution, and others, fueled unrest in the convention (Flowers, 2012, p. 38). However, amongst those controversies, the SBC was still able to grow and provided support for missions, evangelism, and education on a local, national, and international level. In *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture*, Barry Hankins (2002) writes:

By the 1970s the denomination's Baptist Sunday School Board was the largest publisher of religious literature in the world, and the SBC Foreign Mission Board sent out more missionaries than any other denomination. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary was the largest in the world, and there were five other SBC colleges and universities and a handful of secondary schools. Retreat centers and camps abounded across the South, while denominational agencies occupied offices in downtown Nashville, addressing everything from home and foreign missions to political action. (p. 19)

The majority of the 20th century proved a pivotal growing period for the Southern Baptist Convention. However, controversy arose and began to plague the SBC.

Controversy and Response in the Southern Baptist Convention

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Southern Baptist Convention engaged in a massive controversy that led to a great divide between conservatives and moderates (Hankins, 2002, pp. 2–3). The controversy of the SBC included issues of race, inerrancy, women's roles, funding, representation, and education. More recently controversies have focused on abortion, homosexuality, and morality and politics. On a deeper level these controversies are about power, money, religious liberty, and congregational and individual freedoms.

Moderates and conservatives battled in the 1980s, mostly around the banner of inerrancy. "Inerrancy is often a problematic term. Used in populist fashion, as it was during the SBC controversy, it simply means that the Bible is without error in all matters on which it touches, including science and history" (Hankins, 2003, p. 4). Inerrancy became a tool for SBC conservatives to push moderates away and characterize them as liberals who didn't believe in the Bible as the word of God. While moderates continually battled to support their positions on issues like inerrancy, and be a part of the SBC, they

never seemed to be able to stand up against the conservative majority. As conservatives gained power, moderates began to lose leadership and support within the SBC. The controversy and shift in power led to seminary professors losing their jobs, pastors leaving churches, and churches and individuals leaving the Southern Baptist Convention. Once again, Baptists responded by leaving and forming their own organizations. Remember the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention happened because of an exodus from the Triennial Convention earlier in history. Much the same happened as moderates cut ties with the SBC. Instead of fighting the fight in the SBC, moderate Baptists began to find new ways to cooperate for the goals of missions, education, and the work of the Gospel of Christ.

Leaving the SBC organizations that supported the work of the Gospel was difficult for some moderates and refreshing for others. Even still there were some moderate churches that did not sever all ties with the SBC, due to traditions such as its mission work in the United States and around the world and commitment to education for ministers and lay people. There were also churches with little knowledge or concern for the workings or politics of the Southern Baptist Convention. Barry Hankins (2002) writes,

Within the Southern Baptist Convention there are many churches that care little about what happens at denominational headquarters in Nashville. In keeping with Baptist history, members believe that they are the local and gathered body of Christ running their own affairs democratically in light of what they believe to be the will of God. (p. 8)

While the controversies were on the forefront of the minds of leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention, many local churches and members simply continued with their work for the Gospel of Christ, with very little distress about the rocky situation in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Southern Baptist Convention remains a prominent Baptist denomination in the United States and around the world. Its history is one of great success and great controversy. The Southern Baptist Convention and the controversy afflicted with it is a picture of the struggle of Baptist freedoms and organization. Arthur Farnsley, author of *Southern Baptist Politics: Authority and Power in the Restructuring of an American Denomination* (1994) writes, “The history of the Southern Baptist Convention is, in part, the story of the struggle between the denomination’s congregational, independent roots and its need for efficient, bureaucratic control” (p. 35). Due to the struggles within the Southern Baptist Convention, other Baptist denominations and organizations formed and have made to make an impact on Baptist life, tradition, belief, and practice.

Other Denominations and Organizations Formed

When controversy arose and no compromise was in sight, moderate Baptists did as their forefathers, and sought to organize their own denominations and organizations to continue support of missions, education, and fellowship. Two prominent organizations were the Southern Baptist Alliance and the Baptist Committed.

One of the organizations that formed out of the disdain for the operations and theology of the Southern Baptist Convention was the Southern Baptist Alliance (SBA), which later was called the Alliance of Baptists. This organization was formed in 1987 by

the progressive minded people of the Southern Baptist Convention as a place of refuge from the oppression of the organization and protest against the policies and practices of the organization. Nancy Ammerman (1993) describes the people of the Southern Baptist Alliance:

They were the people who fought for civil rights in the sixties and who were the first to champion women ministers in the seventies. Many enjoyed a more liturgical form of worship than did most Southern Baptists, and they were more ecumenical in outlook and involvement. (p. 303)

The Southern Baptist Alliance was seen as extremely liberal, even by some moderates. According to Ammerman (1993), “Between 1987 and 1990 the SBA was branded by virtually everyone else in the denomination as too radical for any ‘normal’ Southern Baptist to associate with” (p. 303). At that point in time the people of the Southern Baptist Alliance wanted nothing to do with the Southern Baptist Convention, while some moderates, were still fighting for control in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Another organization that formed out of the controversy of the Southern Baptist Convention was The Baptist Committed, which later became the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. At first the moderates who formed The Baptist Committed fought for their say in the Southern Baptist Convention, but began to formally distance themselves from the Southern Baptist Convention around 1990 when they realized they had little say in the election of a Southern Baptist Convention President. The final divisive instance was when Morris Chapman was elected president over the moderate choice, Daniel Vestal, after great effort by the moderates to swing the pendulum of the SBC. Following the defeat, the Baptist Committed sought to organize and plan a meeting. In August of 1990,

a small group of concerned moderate Baptists met in Atlanta. Nancy Ammerman (1993) writes about the first meeting, “They sang and worshipped together, listening to the kind of preaching they had been missing at the Pastors’ Conference of the SBC. But mostly they talked to each other about the future . . . It was as though in defeat they had found freedom” (p. 302). Once again a Baptist organization began out of dissent and disappointment. The Baptist Committed decided to leave the oppression and controversy of their beloved Southern Baptist Convention and seek something new in the realm of Baptist life. Much work was done by moderate leaders and passionate committed Baptists after the initial meeting to plan another meeting and begin to formally organize as a Baptist institution. In May of 1991 a group of about six thousand met in Atlanta to adopt a constitution, decide on missions to support, and decide on an official name (Ammerman, 1993, p. 304). The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was birthed quickly, probably because the moderate Baptists had been frustrated for years with the Southern Baptist Convention and were eager to make a clean, fresh and hopeful break. While the people of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship sought to be different from the Southern Baptist Convention, they shared the traditional Southern Baptist passions of missions and education. They also sought opportunities to worship, fellowship, and confront social and ethical issues within religious life (Ammerman, 1993, p. 305). The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship became a new home for many Southern Baptist moderates, especially those who supported, encouraged, and affirmed women in ministry.

Conclusion

Baptists in America were founded by Roger Williams on the principles of religious liberty and freedom. Later, the Triennial Convention was formed as a way for Baptists to organize around their want to support missions. The Southern Baptist Convention was formed by Baptists who were dissatisfied with the workings of the Triennial Convention. The Southern Baptist Convention continued to focus on missions and grew to be one of the largest denominations in America. While the Southern Baptist Convention was successful, it was plagued with controversy and dissention. From that controversy and dissention, other denominations and organizations formed. Within this atmosphere of liberty and freedom, controversy and dissention, women have struggled to find a place to grow and serve in their Christian faith.

Women in Southern Baptist History

Women have been a part of Baptist history from the beginning. Their stories, names, and power of influence are harder to find because Baptist and church history in general has been mostly penned by men. As Libby Bellinger (1993) writes in her chapter, “The History of Southern Baptist Women in Ministry” from *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC: Moderate Responses to the Fundamentalist Movement*, “Women in ministry have a rich heritage, but a heritage more hidden than revealed” (p. 130). The history of women within the Southern Baptist tradition is marked by; being ignored and confusion, mixed responses to the Women’s Movement, and some evidence of progress and change.

Being Ignored and Confusion

The harsh reality of women in Southern Baptist history is women were not present at the founding of the denomination and were not thought of in its founding. Baptist men formed the Southern Baptist denomination with little regard for women and their role in the church, even though women have always been a huge part of church life; therefore, Southern Baptist women have faced inequality since the beginning. David Morgan (2003) in *Southern Baptist Sisters: In Search of Status 1845-2000*, shares, “The inequality that Southern Baptist women have suffered was brought mainly by men ignoring them or simply reminding them that the Bible clearly says that women should keep silent in churches” (p. xiii). Women have been ignored and oppressed throughout Southern Baptist history. Their hard work within the church and for the church has been ignored or made to seem unimportant and women have been oppressed by being viewed as unable to serve in certain leadership roles within the church and even not allowed to speak in mixed crowds.

The history of women in Southern Baptist life is also hard to navigate due to the ebb and flow of thought and practice. Women have always been involved in the life of churches in the Southern Baptist heritage; however, the ways they have served and the ways they have been viewed by men and the denomination have changed throughout history. As David Morgan (2003) writes, “At times the sisters have enjoyed more status than at others times. Almost invariably when women in American society won battles and made gains in status, similar gains were realized by women in the Southern Baptist Convention” (pp. 4–5). The changing regard for women in Southern Baptist churches

has been affected by the changing regard for women in America. When women have gained rights and respect in American culture, there have also been gains in churches and denominations. However, oftentimes these gains have also caused push-back. At times, when women in America have won battles, Southern Baptist leaders have held tighter to their convictions of male leadership and the submission of women. The women's movement has had a profound effect on the history of women in the Southern Baptist tradition.

Women's Movement

The issue of Southern Baptist women's roles and leadership within the church and denomination came more to light due to the Women's Movement in American society. It took years for the Southern Baptist denomination and churches to feel the ripples of the Seneca Falls Convention and the organization and growing of the women's movement in America. A major reason the effects of the early women's movement took so long was because Southern Baptist men and even some Southern Baptist women were comfortable in their traditional prescribed roles and intimidated by the new and liberal ideas of the women's movement and the women who championed them.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a big personality in the early feminism and the American Women's Movement. Stanton was probably most known for her *Woman's Bible* which she introduced in the 1890s. Her *Woman's Bible* alienated her from many Christian women at that time. From Morgan's (2003) perspective, "She attacked established religion for making women subject to men. Few women at that time were willing to attack the Bible and Christianity in the radical way she did" (p. 40). Elizabeth

Cady Stanton was bold and outspoken, very different from typical Southern Baptist women, especially the Southern Baptist women of her time. Stanton and other women were used as examples by Southern Baptist men to invalidate the ideas of the women's movement and warn Southern Baptist women about following such women in their quest for equality, position, and rights (Morgan, 2003, p. 32). Southern Baptist women were encouraged to stay quiet, to listen to their husbands, and continue on with the status quo, and for a while many did.

As the quest for women's rights continued in American society, Southern Baptist women did see glimpses of progress and continued to worship, learn, grow, and serve in Southern Baptist churches. As women in society fought for rights, respect and representation, so did women of faith. Some changes occurred and women did see openness to more roles within church and denominational leadership. However, when the early women's movement gave birth to the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s, many religious leaders fought back. Many Southern Baptist were angered and appalled by the sentiments of women's lib. Even some Southern Baptist women were also against it, just as many Southern Baptist women of the early women's movement were not impressed. According to Morgan (2003),

Southern Baptist women, generally speaking, were not thrilled with them either. A preponderance of the sisters ignored the calls of women activists for radical change in the 1960s and 1970s just as their mothers and grandmothers had ignored the suffragists decades earlier. While Southern Baptist women never joined the radical movements in any significant numbers, they still benefited from their actions. (p. 47)

As a majority, Southern Baptist women did not officially support the Women's Liberation Movement. Most Southern Baptist women continued to serve in the church, listen to their husbands and remain content with their acceptable roles.

As the second wave of feminism emerged, once again Southern Baptist men and women faced bold and outspoken women, like Betty Friedan, who was one of the founders of the Women's Liberation Movement. "In 1963 Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, which was a call to battle for women activists. Friedan demanded the liberation of women from the boring role of housewife and mother" (Morgan, 2033, p. 44). This was a bold statement, especially in the eyes of Southern women, who often played the roles of housewife and mother well. Most Southern Baptist women played these roles extremely well because they had been told and taught they were to submit to their husbands and their main task was raising children in the faith. To say the ideas and women of the Women's Liberation Movement appalled and intimidated many Southern Baptists would be an understatement.

Progress and Change

Even though Southern Baptist women did not support the Women's Liberation Movement in droves, they did reap benefits from the movement. Southern Baptist women were given the right to serve as messengers at the convention meetings and sought more opportunities within local church and denominational leadership (Morgan, 2003, p. 45). The Women's Liberation Movement sparked thought, discussion, and encouragement of women within the Southern Baptist tradition. Meetings and discussions were called to discuss the role of women in the Southern Baptist Convention

and women began to organize groups to uplift and support women in the Southern Baptist tradition.

The 1970s was an important decade for women in the Southern Baptist Convention, especially for women who wanted to pursue professional ministry. According to Libby Bellinger (1993), “In 1973 there were fewer than a dozen ordained women ministers, but the seeds of the movement were sown” (p. 130). Due to the Women’s Liberation Movement, women and men began to examine the roles of women within all aspects of society, including the church. Susan Shaw (2010) writes, “In the 1970s, many Southern Baptist leaders, especially those at the denomination’s seminaries and publishing houses, embraced a number of stated goals of feminism” (p. 11). More meetings were organized to deal with women’s issues and publications began to publish more works about the issues surrounding women in the church and in church leadership. Seminaries also became involved in the discussion as they began to hold meetings, publish works, and offer classes around the ideas of women in the church. In 1973, a male student at Southern Seminary even focused his thesis on the implications of the Women’s Liberation Movement on the Southern Baptist Convention (Bellinger, 1993, p. 130). While more Southern Baptist leaders, pastors, and theologians became open to the conversations surrounding women’s roles, more actions took place to bring the issue of women to the forefront. There were many brave Southern Baptists who were tired of sitting around and waiting for change to happen and were willing to be catalysts for change. In 1978, Frank Stagg and Evelyn Stagg published *Women in the World of Jesus*. Their work became the base for a national consultation on women in ministry vocations

(Bellinger, 1993, p. 130-131). For Southern Baptists, the 1970s proved to be a decade of discussion and action. By this time women were serving as deacons, pastors, ministers and leaders, but that was not enough for the women, moderates, and progressives of the denomination. However, while all of this was happening, Southern Baptist conservatives continued to hold to their traditional views of women as subordinate to men and unfit to hold leadership roles within the church. While some Southern Baptist leaders, theologians, and clergy were embracing ideals of the women's movement, many still opposed the movement and changes it brought. Like most moves for change, the Women's Liberation Movement had some effect on the role of women within Southern Baptist life, but the change was hindered by the inconsistency or freedom of thought, belief, and practice within the Southern Baptist realm.

Conclusion

Women within Southern Baptist history were often ignored and their contributions diminished. Southern Baptist women suffered from inconsistency of thought and practice in relation to their roles within the local church and denominational structure. The Women's Movement was crucial in providing opportunities for the women's issues within religious tradition to be discussed and explored. While many Southern Baptists disagreed with the women's movement and some of the influence women involved, there is no doubt it had an effect. Southern Baptist women were oppressed and regulated to certain roles. Some were content with their established roles, while others were not.

Women's Roles

Women have played an important role in the church and in the Christian tradition, even in the Southern Baptist tradition. The importance of women in faith traditions goes back to the beginning of Christianity and the early church. Sarah Frances Anders and Marilyn Metcalf-Whittaker (1993) in their chapter “Women as Lay Leaders and Clergy: A Critical Issue,” in *Southern Baptists Observed: Multiple Perspectives on a Changing Denomination* share,

Women played vital, visible roles in early Christendom, and the names of notable devout women surfaced occasionally in those early centuries. Many centuries later early Baptist laywomen made a persistent impact on the religious nurturing of children and the cause of missions. (p. 201)

Even though the history of women's roles within the Christian tradition shows disregard and oppression, one must not think women have not played a part in the history and growth of the church. And even though Southern Baptists have the reputation of oppressing women, especially in leadership, one would be ignorant to think women have not been an integral part of the Southern Baptist tradition. The following examines the roles of Southern Baptist women within the local church and the denomination.

Women's Roles in the Local Church

Southern Baptist women have been a part of local Baptist churches from the beginning. While early histories included references to women deacons and a few women preachers, most women have served in specific areas of ministry and have struggled to obtain leadership roles.

In early histories of American Baptists, there were references to women deacons and elders. H. Leon McBeth (1979), a well-known Baptist historian and supporter of women in leadership, writes, “Even after the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845, churches in the South often had deaconesses” (p. 18). Deacons and elders have traditionally served as the spiritual and organizational leaders of local congregations; early in American Baptist history, women served local churches in these roles. There were even instances of early women preachers in the American Baptist history. In *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*, McBeth (1987) mentions Martha Stearns Marshall as one of the early women preachers who “were notable for their fervent preaching and praying in public” (pp. 690-691). Pamela Durso (2013) also writes about her; “Martha Stearns Marshall, who beginning around 1754, often prayed and preached during worship services conducted by her brother Shubal Stearns and her husband Daniel Marshall” (p. 35). While historians like McBeth and Durso point out this early American Baptist woman preacher to support women in ministry and leadership, it is evident these instances were not the norm.

Generally speaking, women were involved in church ministries dealing with children, music, and missions. Women did not speak or preside over meetings where men and women attended together. As Morgan (2003) writes, “Obviously the prospect of women speaking to mixed audiences and presiding over meetings seriously disturbed conservative men—especially Southern Baptists” (p. 18). The roles of Southern Baptist women within the local church were limited by the structure and system of the church, as Sarah Frances Anders (1975) writes,

Women historically have not figured prominently nor representatively throughout the committee structure of the local church. They have often lamented their confinement to children's and mission work. (p. 31)

It is also evident through historical recollections, that Southern Baptist women and the Southern Baptist Convention became more concerned about their roles in the church as the Women's Liberation Movement progressed in America. Women began to step out of the traditionally prescribed roles for women and take leadership in other areas of the church that had been reserved for men. As Anders and Metcalf-Whittaker (1993) writes, Southern Baptist women were a few years behind women of other congregations in the changing of these roles,

As Southern Baptist women had, in the 1970s, slowly been making their way into positions of denominational leadership, women throughout Protestantism also were making their way into local church pulpits. By 1970 there were an estimated seven thousand clergywomen through the nation, the largest number being Pentecostals, with only a handful being Southern Baptists. (p. 205)

Women's roles within Southern Baptist life were slower to change, but change they did. Not only did the roles change, but women began to take on the roles of ministers.

Addie Davis was the first Southern Baptist woman ordained as a minister in 1964 at Watts Street Baptist Church in Durham, NC. While this ordination caused attention and led the way to others, the process was slow. Even when women were accepted into ministerial roles, often their roles were limited. "In 1980 Anne Rosser baptized three converts, the first woman minister known to have baptized in a Southern Baptist church" (McBeth, 1987, p. 691). Baptism is a sacred act within the Baptist church; therefore,

Anne Rosser's participation in the baptism of new Christians was an important step in women ministers obtaining the full implications of their call, ordination and service.

Even though women began to be accepted and even ordained by Southern Baptist churches in ministerial roles, there was still some hesitation by the fundamentalists realm of the Southern Baptist Convention. David Morgan (2003) tells the story of the 1984 opposition:

In 1984, when the Southern Baptist Convention held its annual meeting in Kansas City, fundamentalists were in control. One of the significant developments at that meeting was the passage of Resolution Number 3, which encouraged the service of women in all church activities 'other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination.' . . . Passed by a vote of 4,793 to 3,460, it was not the first such act by the SBC, and it was not to be the last. (p. 49)

Even though women were already serving and had already been ordained for "pastoral functions," the convention was still able to pass Resolution Number 3. While this resolution was a victory in the minds of the fundamentalists, more progressive Southern Baptists and Southern Baptist churches continued to exercise their local church autonomy by ordaining, hiring, and affirming women in all roles of the church. According to Anders and Metcalf-Whittaker (1993),

By 1991 there were more than eight hundred ordained Southern Baptist women, but only thirty-eight were serving as local church pastors. Among these woman the pastoral role remains the most visible, desired—and controversial—form of leadership. (pp. 205–206)

Following the resolution in 1984, Southern Baptist women who sought to pursue ministry roles did face opposition. Despite that opposition, churches who affirmed the Baptist

principles of local church autonomy and soul freedom created space for the women who felt called to serve in professional ministry. Even though there were places open for women ministers, the number of those places was still small in comparison to the places open to men. Most women became associate pastors, many focused on the areas of children, youth, or mission ministries. While more women were accepting the call and some churches sought to affirm them, the role of pastor continued to be a hard position for women to attain, and still is to an extent. At first women were generally accepted as associate pastors under the leadership of a male pastor.

The issue of women's roles, local church leadership, and women as ministers continues to unfold. While Resolution Number 3 still exists, many Baptist churches, some only loosely connected to the Southern Baptist Convention, affirm women ministers in all roles while other churches do not affirm women ministers at all.

Women's Roles in Denominational Leadership

While women, in spite of the roles designated to them by male leaders, were an active force within local Southern Baptist churches, women were not involved in the denominational life of the Southern Baptist Convention in its beginnings. "No one seemed to care what part the women might want to play in the Convention's affairs. The role they would play was decided for them by their husbands and other Southern Baptist brethren" (Morgan, 2003, p. xii). Women were not even mentioned in the original constitution (Morgan, 2003, p. 52). No women were officially involved in the conception and formation of the Southern Baptist Convention and it took years for women to be involved in the denominational structure.

Early on, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted an annual meeting plan with messengers from Southern Baptist churches who had the right to vote. Bill Leonard (2003) shares the story of the first-time women messengers became a question in *Baptist Ways: A History*,

In 1885, the question of admitting women as messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention arose when the Arkansas delegation brought two women, Mrs. Early and Mrs. Eagle. So great was the outcry from males that the constitution of the denomination was changed to read ‘brethren’ rather than the original ‘messengers’ . . . It was not until 1918 that the role of messenger was made available to Southern Baptist women. (p. 223)

Though women did not attend the annual meetings at first and were not approved as messengers until 1918, many traveled with their husbands. For the 1868 meeting the women who traveled with their husbands attended a separate meeting at the home of Mrs. Anne Graves. This meeting focused on the topic of missions (Morgan, 2003, p. 53). However, “Beginning in 1901 women were allowed to take seats on the floor of the convention, and in 1913 the convention heard directly, for the first time, a report from the WMU, but a man presented that report” (Morgan, 2003, pp. 64-64). Women began to be included in the annual meeting, but in reality, had no vote, no say and no voice; however, women continued to gain respect in the annual meeting. David Morgan (2003) shares the story of the first woman to speak at the meeting:

Another step forward for women took place in 1916 when B.D. Gray, secretary of the Home Mission Board, allowed the WMU corresponding secretary, Kathleen Mallory, some of his time on the program. Thus, Miss Mallory became the first women to speak to an SBC annual convention when she introduced Mrs. Maude R. McLure, who was the first principle of the WMU Training School that had been founded in 1907 for the purpose of training women missionaries. (p. 65)

Missions has been a powerful place for women throughout Southern Baptist history. Even though a man presented the first report of the WMU at the annual meeting, the fact that it was read aloud for the room full of male messengers was a testament to the work of women in missions and in the denomination. B.D. Gray's gesture was bold. Kathleen Mallory and Maude McLure spoke at the annual meeting before women were even allowed to be voting messengers.

As women continued to take leadership roles in local church missions and in the Women's Missionary Union, their lack of representation within the structure of the Southern Baptist denomination became more evident. The SBC was structured into different governing boards. These boards were comprised of nominated leaders from Southern Baptist congregations. However, it was not until around the 1970s that women began to serve on these boards (Anders & Metchalf-Whittaker, 1993, p. 204). At that time, "Southern Baptist women are probably in clear majority in the pews of most local churches," yet they are underrepresented within the denominational leadership structure (Anders & Metchalf-Whittaker, 1993, p. 207). While women were unrepresented within the decision-making boards of the denomination, women were finally being recognized by the denomination for their leadership roles outside of their traditional roles "with children, music and missions" (Anders & Metchalf-Whittaker, 1993, p. 205). These were great steps for Southern Baptist women, but compared to women in other American mainline denominations, Southern Baptist women were still behind the times in equality and leadership. "As Southern Baptist women had, in the 1970s been making their way into positions of denominational leadership, women throughout Protestantism also were

making their way into local church pulpits” (Anders & Metchalf-Whittaker, 1993, p. 205). Finally in 1978, “after most other evangelical bodies had held such consciousness raising conferences, three hundred invited participants attended the National Convocation on Women in the Southern Baptist Convention, held in Nashville” (Anders & Metchalf-Whittaker, 1993, p. 205). The Southern Baptist tradition was reluctant to include women, embrace women leadership, and face the issues of the Women’s Movement; nevertheless, slowly women were making their impact and abilities known.

The progression of Southern Baptist women in denominational leadership was been a roller coaster ride. H. Leon McBeth (1979) supports this in his famous book, *Women in Baptist Life*, when he writes, “In 1885 women were excluded from the Southern Baptist Convention; in 1963 a woman was elected vice-president of that body, and in 1978 women composed 42 percent of its messengers” (p. 16). While inclusion and respect were tasted in the 1960s and 1970s, the resolution in 1984, which affirmed the work of women within the church except for pastoral roles and ordained roles, such as Deacon, disappointed of many Southern Baptist women, women ministers, and their supporters. Keep in mind this roller coaster was mainly focused on women in denominational leadership, but the Southern Baptist understanding of women in ministry was greatly affected by the denomination’s view of women. The denomination’s view of women was made clearer in the submission statement adopted to the Baptist Faith and Message in 1998. The statement adopted said wives should submit to their husbands. The statement encouraged equal worth for husbands and wives in the sight of God, but declared husbands to be the head of the household and insisted wives submit to their

husbands' authority, as their husbands submit to Christ. Two years later the Baptist Faith and Message was amended again. The conservative majority of the Southern Baptist Convention sought to take control and make their beliefs known through this document. The revised 2000 Baptist Faith and Message also said only men should serve as senior pastors (Hankins, 2000, p. 225). In two years the Southern Baptist Convention made it very clear on where they stood in their view of women, in the home and in church leadership.

The Baptist Faith and Message is a statement of beliefs generally accepted by most Southern Baptists. Baptists pride themselves on being no-creedal people; however, the Baptist Faith and Message seeks to be a general statement of beliefs for churches who consider themselves Southern Baptist. Because Baptists value the freedom of individual believers to read and interpret the Bible for themselves and the freedom of local churches to make faith and polity decisions for themselves, the Baptist Faith and Message is not necessarily binding. Even though the Baptist Faith and Message is not binding, the stated beliefs and practices, and especially the adopting of new statements in the document is a serious declaration by the Southern Baptist Convention, and the leadership knew that. However, Hankins (2002) points out,

As of 2000, no church has ever been refused seats at an SBC meeting because of its position on women, and only on the issue of ordination of gay deacons and gay marriage have messengers been refused seats, an incident involving only two churches in North Carolina. (p. 226)

As a denomination, it is hard for the Southern Baptist Convention to not include a church because of their local church beliefs, because the Baptist Faith and Message is not

binding and the convention is not set-up as a hierarchical denomination and church structure. The reality is the Southern Baptist Convention didn't have to refuse messengers; they had made their views clear and at that point, more progressive churches were fed-up. Instead of fighting, progressive churches severed ties with the convention and began to align themselves with other Baptist organizations.

Women continue to be underrepresented in local church and denominational leadership within the Southern Baptist tradition. Often women are still regulated to "appropriate areas of leadership," such as children and missions. Local churches and the Southern Baptist Convention have built many boundaries to keep women from leading in their conservative structure. However, women have found ways to serve and lead.

Finding a Place

Southern Baptist women responded to oppression within the local church and denomination by finding their own place. They became involved in missions, formed the Women's Missionary Union, and created an organization for women ministers.

Women in Missions

Christian women of many denominations began supporting missions early in American church history. Missions support and education were acceptable places for women to serve in most churches. As Morgan (2003) writes,

Long before there was a Southern Baptist Convention, Baptist women and women of other denominations had worked diligently to promote both home and foreign missions. Indeed, it was chiefly women who enlisted the forces of the church in the mission enterprise, educating and marshaling the lay forces far more successful than the mission boards of various denominations had been able to do. (p. 16)

Southern Baptist women were well known for their work and passion in the field of missions. Mission ministry was a bright spot in the history of women in the Southern Baptist Convention. Southern Baptist women involved in mission work were bold, passionate, and effective.

Before Baptist churches in the South decided to form their own denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention (1845), most Baptists in America were a part of the Triennial Convention. The Triennial Convention's main purpose was mission work, specifically the sending of missionaries to foreign places to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to inspire and educate American Baptists about mission work. "In 1814, Charlotte H. White, a widow, became the first unmarried woman to apply to the Triennial Convention for appointment as a missionary to Calcutta. She provided her own funding and lived with her sister and brother-in-law, who served in India" (Leonard, 2003, p. 176). At this time, it was customary for women to serve as missionaries alongside their husbands. It was also customary for missionaries to provide a majority of their own funding, even though the Triennial Convention sought to help support missionaries to assist with the financial burden. When the Baptist churches in the South split from the Triennial Convention to form a new denomination, mission work was of upmost importance. Southern Baptists were committed to mission work and women were a huge part of that commitment. For a while, the new Southern Baptist missionary model was much the same as the Triennial Convention's, to send a husband and wife team to do foreign mission work. This decision was supported by safety concerns for single women

traveling in unknown territories. This practice soon changed and single women were allowed to serve as missionaries, opening the door for more women to serve.

One of the most well-known Southern Baptists is not a President of the Southern Baptist Convention, a pastor, or even a male; it is a woman missionary, Charlotte Digges Moon, “known to nearly every Southern Baptist as Lottie Moon” (Morgan, 2003, p. 1). Lottie Moon served as a missionary to China for 40 years. In *Women in Baptist Life*, Leon McBeth (1979), describes Lottie’s short path to mission work, “In the spring of 1873 her pastor preached a moving missionary sermon . . . A few weeks later, with minimal training and preparation, she was on her way” (pp. 90–91). In China, Moon led a school for girls. She also traveled to nearby villages to read the Bible and tell people about Jesus. Her good work did not go without critique. According to McBeth (1979),

Some of the men missionaries complained that Lottie Moon was preaching, a charge which incensed her. She replied that the people needed and wanted to hear of Christ, and if the men did not like the way she was sharing the gospel, let them send some men to do it better. (p. 91)

While women in America were still confined to teaching children and girls, women missionaries had more freedom and responsibility. “Through her example and words, millions of Baptist women and men have been informed, inspired, challenged, and directed into useful participation in sharing the gospel around the world” (McBeth, 1979, p. 92). Though Lottie Moon is one of the most famous missionaries, or women, in the Southern Baptist tradition, she was not the first woman missionary. Bill Leonard (2003), writes of some of these first women missionaries,

Southern Baptist's first single female missionary was Harriet A. Baker, sent out from Virginia as a missionary to Canton, China in 1849, just four years after the Convention was formed. Health considerations forced her resignation in 1853, and it was not until 1872 that Lula Whilden and Edmonia Harris Moon, single women, were sent out. Edmonia Moon was followed by her sister, Charlotte Digges (Lottie) Moon (1840-1912), perhaps the best-known missionary in Southern Baptist history. Edmonia Moon was supported with \$400 per year by the Women's Missionary Society of Richmond, Virginia. Lottie Moon received support from Baptist women in Georgia. (p. 176)

While Southern Baptist women in America were limited in their service and roles within the church, mission work was their outlet; missions was their expertise; missions was their passion. It is somewhat fitting that Southern Baptists are most known for a woman missionary, since so many Southern Baptist women poured their lives, blood, sweat, tears, and money into supporting missions programs and missionaries.

Even though Southern Baptist women were huge supporters of missions and even some single women were serving as missionaries, denominational leadership was still a struggle for Southern Baptist women in America. Because women had shown such support of missions organization, education, and funding, it was recommended that women be represented on committees for the Home and Foreign Mission Boards (Leonard, 2003, p. 178). The proposal failed. According to Leonard (2003), "Apparently, men worried that bringing women into the inner workings of the mission boards would appear to sanction the suffrage movement and other women's rights effort" (p. 178). Again, the convention was fighting against the progression of women's rights in society. However, in 1892, after Henry Allen Tupper became the Foreign Mission Board secretary, he "made room for women in foreign missions" (Morgan, 2003, p. 54).

Mission work was important to Southern Baptists, especially Southern Baptist women. This area of ministry was not just a passion, but one of the acceptable ways women could serve within Southern Baptist churches and the denomination. The role of women in missions grew as Southern Baptist women took ownership of their power and passion for missions.

Women's Missionary Union (WMU)

The formation of the Women's Missionary Union was an example of how the role of Southern Baptist women grew, within the realm of missions. The Women's Missionary Union took on a life of its own, so even though women may not have received the respect and representation they wanted within the Southern Baptist Convention, they found a way to forge their own path in partnership with the convention. The WMU was successful in promoting and supporting missions while maintaining its identity in support, but not under the control of the Southern Baptist Convention. This identity gave the Women's Missionary Union great freedom.

The Women's Missionary Union was formed for the purpose of raising funds for supporting missions. Southern Baptist women sought to find their own niche within the Southern Baptist Convention because they were not able to serve as convention messengers, committee members, or pastors. It didn't take long, after the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention (1845) for women to begin to organize themselves for the purpose of mission work which was seen as appropriate "women's work" within Southern Baptist life. The Women's Missionary Union formed as national organization in May 1888, while states also formed their own organizations (Leonard, 2003, P. 167).

The purpose was to raise excitement and funds for Southern Baptist missionaries and missionary efforts. Local churches also formed WMU organizations. The Women's Missionary Union did not see itself as competition for the mission work supported and led by men within the Southern Baptist Convention, but as an aid for the work already being led by men. "It provided some of the most important funding and overall energy for the missionary enterprise among white Baptists in the South" (Leonard, 2003, p. 167). Even though the Women's Missionary Union was extremely successful in raising funds for Southern Baptist missionaries, this organization and the women who supported it on all levels, were still seen by some as a threat. David Morgan (2003) writes,

In the very month that Southern Baptist women organized their Women's Missionary Union, John A. Broadus, perhaps the foremost theologian among Southern Baptists at that juncture, made a statement opposing women speaking in public and taking a leadership role in the church. Like others, he apparently feared that a women's missionary organization would lead to women mounting pulpits to preach. (p. 18)

The Women's Missionary Union, on a national, state, and local church level, gave Southern Baptist women an outlet for public speaking and leadership. The women were intelligent, well-spoken and passionate, so it made sense that some men would fear what would happen if their abilities and passions became known on a larger scale. Conservative Southern Baptist men tolerated women working on missions within the WMU, as long as they did not overstep their boundaries. Southern Baptist women worked diligently to build a mission empire. The WMU raised huge amounts of money to aid the Southern Baptist Convention's mission efforts and educated thousands of

women and children in local churches on the importance and impact of missions, but still did not receive the respect they earned within the convention.

The WMU still exists today with a partnership with the Southern Baptist Convention. Like the SBC's view of women's roles, the SBC's view of the WMU has fluctuated over the years. At times the SBC and the WMU work beautifully together and at other times they work in contention. While there are many reasons for the complicated relationship, money and power are major factors in the relationship. The WMU raises huge amounts of money for missions and the Southern Baptist Convention appreciates the money. The WMU has wanted more representation and respect, which have not always been given. In recent history, the WMU has tried to lessen the relationship in order to gain more freedom in their polity and practices.

While not all local Southern Baptist churches fully understand the history and relationship of the WMU and SBC, most support missions. The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering are still two of the largest offerings of the year for Southern Baptist Churches and the Southern Baptist Convention. One of these offerings goes to home missions, while the other goes to foreign missions. Once again, in Southern Baptist tradition, a tradition dominated by male leadership and known for the oppression of women, the two largest offerings of the year were created by women, named after women, and largely championed by women in local churches.

The Women's Missionary Union was important because it was formed by women and reflected the Baptist passion of missions. While early Southern women were not involved in church leadership on the local or denominational level, they were leaders of

missionary organizations on all levels. The Women's Missionary Union gave Southern Baptist women a place to use their God-given gifts and passions within the church. The Women's Missionary Union also gave women confidence and practice in leadership. The WMU was been more than just a place for missions; it was a place for Southern Baptist women to prove to Southern Baptist men and themselves that they are capable of great things within the church and denomination.

Women in Ministry Organization

While the Women's Missionary Union provided an outlet and safe haven for women leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention, for some who were called to professional ministry, involvement in missions was not enough. There were women ministers who wanted support, a voice, and a place in Southern Baptist life. These women, despite the feelings of many conservative Southern Baptist ministers, leaders, and churches, worked to create a space for encouraging and caring for the needs of Baptist women ministers.

The Women in Ministry organization was formed out of a cry from women ministers connected to the Southern Baptist tradition as a place to struggle with and celebrate their call in the midst of the Baptist tradition they were connected and devoted to. The forming of the Women in Ministry organization began at a the "Theology as a Verb" conference in Charlotte, NC in October 1983 where Nancy Hasting Sehested asked for national conferences and a newsletter for Baptist women ministers (Bellinger, 1993, p. 131). The women who began the Women in Ministry venture worked hard and fast on the heels of the "Issues Affecting Women" conference. Ironically these women chose to

work with the Christian Life Commission (now known as the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission), an agency of the Southern Baptist Convention. Even more surprising, the agency agreed to support a network for Southern Baptist women in ministry, just a year before the 1984 Southern Baptist resolution discouraging women from serving in ordained roles. Despite the climate of the Southern Baptist Convention surrounding the issues of women, especially leadership and ordination, the forming of the Southern Baptist Women in Ministry began.

The first meeting of the new organization happened quickly after the conference in Charlotte. The women involved were passionate and in need of support so they worked diligently to organize. A task force was formed, with Addie Davis as the moderator and planning began for a meeting before the 1983 SBC annual meeting. The goals of the meeting were fellowship, worship, business, and support of women in ministry (Bellinger, 1993, p. 132). There was a vision, a goal, and enthusiasm as Davis and the task force looked toward Pittsburgh. “The first meeting of Women in Ministry, SBC was held in Pittsburgh, prior to the 1983 meeting of the SBC. It was attended by seventy-five persons” (Bellinger, 1993, p. 130). During the meeting the group adopted a purpose statement focused on support women called to vocational ministry and membership was opened to women ministers and their supporters. During this meeting, the new organization also distributed its first newsletter called *Folio*. “*Folio* was published because of ‘an increased demand for more communication, support, and affirmation among Southern Baptist women ministers’” (Bellinger, 1993, p. 133).

Following this meeting, passionate women continued to lay the foundations for a support network for Southern Baptist women in ministry.

Part of the vision for Women in Ministry, SBC was to connect women ministers and their supporters within the Southern Baptist realm. Creating networks, communication and support among this oppressed sect of the denomination was key. This was only possible because support for female ministers had grown in other denominations and was beginning to grow in Southern Baptist life. Southern Baptist women ministers were starved for support, so when the initial organization began, women and their supporters jumped quickly on the bandwagon.

Ironically, the organization of Women in Ministry, SBC came around the same time that the ordination of women was a hot topic in Southern Baptist politics. The matter of ordaining women was an issue in local churches, associations, state conventions, and on the national level (Bellinger, 1993, p. 135). While 1983 was an exciting year for Southern Baptist women ministers because of the founding of Women in Ministry, SBC, it was also a heartbreaking year as the Southern Baptist Convention passed their famous resolution on women. Later, in 1984 the SBC presented another resolution, focused more specifically on the ordination of women and their roles in the church. Once again, because of the autonomy of the local church, this resolution could not make Southern Baptist churches not ordain women ministers; however, they sent a very clear statement on the climate of support for women ministers among Southern Baptists. While many supported the resolutions, other individuals, churches, associations, and state conventions disapproved. The Baptist General Association of

Virginia was the first to public ally disapprove (Bellinger, 1993, p. 135). Tensions mounted around the role of women ministers; this is why the Women in Ministry, SBC was so important at the time.

While these resolutions were discouraging to Southern Baptist women ministers and Southern Baptist women who sought to be ministers, the work of the Women in Ministry continued.

Disdaining the controversy in the SBC and mocking the 1984 resolution against the ordination of women, WIM, SBC pressed forward towards their third meeting. The 1985 Women in Ministry, SBC meeting was held June 8-9, 1985, at the Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas. (Bellinger, 1993, p. 136)

While the resolutions were powerful, the continuing of the Women in Ministry organization showed there was support for ordained women within the Southern Baptist tradition. This was also an example of the complexity of the traditional Baptist freedoms. While the resolution was the voice of the majority, the voice of the minority still existed and sought to be respected. “The highlight of the conference—as reported on evaluations—was hearing Addie Davis, the first Southern Baptist woman ordained to the clergy” (Bellinger, 1993, p. 136). Addie Davis was ordained in a Southern Baptist church 20 years before the resolutions on women and ordination. Her presence was a powerful message in a time of struggle for Southern Baptist women ministers and their supporters. For years, the Women in Ministry, SBC continued to meet before the Southern Baptist Convention’s Annual Meeting. At their 1986 meeting, “the name of the organization was officially changed to Southern Baptist Women in Ministry (SBWIM)” (Bellinger, 1993, p. 137). In 1995 their name was changed again to Baptist Women in

Ministry (BWIM) (Campell-Reed & Durso, 2007, para. 10.) Through the years BWIM has continued to separate itself from the Southern Baptist Convention.

BWIM continues to host an annual meeting with the purpose of networking and worship. Now this meeting is traditionally held around the Annual Gathering of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, as more women ministers and their supporters are aligned with the CBF than the SBC. BWIM is an independent organization that partners with churches and other Baptist organizations. The women's organization has morphed over the years as times and resources have changed. BWIM has gone through several different leadership structures. WIM, SBC started as an organization run by volunteers. Over the years, BWIM has been led by volunteers and paid staff. Currently, BWIM is led by Executive Director Pam Durso and a volunteer leadership team (Campell-Reed & Durso, 2007, para. 11). The original newsletter titled *Folio* is now titled *Vocare*. “*Vocare* is published two times a year by Baptist Women in Ministry. Each issue features articles written by Baptist women about their work in ministry and life experiences” (“*Vocare*,” n.d.). Along with the annual meeting and the newsletter, BWIM hosts a mentoring program, sponsors the Martha Stearns Marshall Month of Preaching in February where churches are encouraged to fill their pulpits with women ministers, and gives two Addie Davis Awards to Baptist women in seminary pursuing theological education (“The Addie Davis Awards,” n.d., para. 1). The heart of the BWIM organization is similar to that of the women who met and began to vision in a Charlotte meeting in 1983. The BWIM motto posted on their website homepage, www.bwim.info, is “advocating, connecting, networking.” Baptist Women ministers and their supporters

are still working to support, nurture and bring together those who view women as capable and called to minister within the Baptist context.

In the early 1980s, among controversy and oppression, Southern Baptist Women ministers sought refuge and encouragement through coming together. The Women in Ministry, SBC organization was the start of a beautiful place for women ministers to feel safe, encouraged, and valued. Baptist women ministers continue that tradition through the work of Baptist Women in Ministry. This organization is important to the history of Southern Baptist women ministers because it was birthed by women ministers, for women ministers (and their supporters), and led by women ministers. The organization has grown and changed over the years, but continues to provide support, encouragement and advocacy for women ministers in the Baptist tradition.

Conclusion

Historically Southern Baptist women were ignored and compartmentalized to certain areas of service. However, these women found ways to serve and succeed. Missions funding, education, and support became a place for women to serve. As Southern Baptist women excelled in the mission realm, they formed the WMU to continue and grow their own work. As Southern Baptist women began to explore the call and serve as professional ministers, they once again had to find a place. The Women in Ministry organization, now Baptist Women in Ministry, was formed as Baptist women called to ministry needed support and refuge. For the WMU and BWIM, Southern Baptist women used their resources and gifts and gathered together for support. Both organizations used their connections to the Southern Baptist Convention in the beginning,

but kept the convention at arm's length for their protection and growth. Structure and support were important for women as they found their place in the Southern Baptist world and continued to face controversy within Southern Baptist life.

Ordination Controversy and Response

Even as women found their place in missions and professional ministry, they continued to face controversy. The ordination of women became a huge issue in Southern Baptist life. The following gives background on ordination, the first woman ordained, the controversy and opposition related to women being ordained, and the response following the controversy.

Ordination

In the Baptist tradition to ordain means to set apart or appoint someone for a specific and holy position. In the Baptist tradition ministers and deacons are ordained. Simply put, ministers are ordained for the purpose of sharing the Gospel message and deacons are ordained for the purpose of spiritual leadership within the local church. Both of these ordinations are seen as sacred and lifetime appointments. Merriam-Webster defines to ordain as “to invest officially (as by the laying on of hands) with ministerial or priestly authority” (“Ordination,” n.d.). Like most religious traditions, the ordination or setting apart of leaders is not taken lightly, hence why it has caused such discussion and controversy, especially in relation to women.

The ordination of women as ministers was an issue in the Southern Baptist world long before the resolutions of 1983 and 1984. Before the discussions that sparked these resolutions, local churches formed their own opinions on ordination in regards to clergy.

As Sarah Frances Anders and Marilyn Metcalf-Whittaker (1993) explain, “Because Southern Baptists have no national hierarchy that governs ordination, each local church has had to make its own decisions” (p. 211). In theory, each Baptist church has the opportunity to ordain whomever they deem worthy in relation to their interpretation of Biblical standards for deacon and clergy leadership.

First Southern Baptist Woman Ordained as Catalyst for Change

As mentioned earlier, women have been an important part of Baptist churches throughout history. They have served in official and unofficial roles in all areas of the church. However, the ordination of a woman minister did not occur in a Southern Baptist church until 1964. “On August 9, 1964, Addie Davis was ordained as a gospel minister at the Watts Street Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina. So far as records show, she was the first women formally ordained to ministry in a Southern Baptist church” (McBeth, 1987, p. 690). Elizabeth Flowers (2012) shares details of Addie Davis’s ordination:

In 1960s, at the age of forty-three, Davis matriculated at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. When her home pastor in Covington made it clear that he would not recommend her or any woman for ordination, she turned to Watts Street Baptist. Davis knew Watts Street’s pastor, Warren Carr, as both he and Watts Street had achieved something of a reputation for their civil rights activism. In recalling his conversations with her, Carr said she was actually unaware that no other Southern Baptist congregation had ordained a woman. Davis’s strong sense of call swayed Carr, who insisted that “she belonged in the center pulpit, according to our tradition, to proclaim the gospel on the Lord’s Day.” (pp. 27–28)

Watts Street and its pastor were liberal in relation to most Southern Baptists. They had already become known for ordaining women as deacons. The ordination of Addie Davis

gave hope to Southern Baptist women ministers who sought the same respect as their male counterparts and Watts Street reminded local churches of their autonomy and power.

The ordination of Addie Davis at Watts Street was monumental as it served as a catalyst for other women and churches to feel comfortable in doing the same; however, the change came about slowly. It took seven years before the second Southern Baptist woman was ordained (Morgan, 2003, p. 173). Though the change was slow, it was happening. “Over the next fifteen years approximately fifty more women were ordained in various churches, and by 1979 a few were serving as pastors” (Morgan, 2003, p. 172). By the 1980s, there were around two hundred reported ordained Southern Baptist women ministers (Hankins, 2002, p. 204).

Ordination Opposition and Controversy

While there was small headway in Southern Baptist life in regard to ordaining women, a vast majority of Southern Baptists still opposed the change. According to H. Leon McBeth (1979), “As of 1977, several state conventions of Southern Baptists had taken an official stand against ordination of women” (p. 23). Not only did state conventions take stands, in 1986 the Home Mission Board, one of the largest boards of the Southern Baptist Convention, made a huge stand against the idea of ordained women clergy. Anders and Metchalf-Whittacker (1993) writes,

In 1984 the SBC adopted a resolution stating that in order to reduce confusion and preserve submission, and because woman sinned first, women should not assume roles of authority in the church. In 1986, citing this resolution as justification, the Home Mission Board refused thereafter to give financial aid to churches that

called female pastors. Rather than subduing women, these actions seemed to have spurred them to greater action. (p. 212)

While the governing bodies and leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention sought to undermine progress, and keep women in their accepted places of service, called, gifted and passionate women continued to seek ministry positions, ordination, and respect, and some Southern Baptist churches supported them. “Indeed the greatest number of ordinations were in 1984 and 1986, years when significant actions were taken asserting the subordinate roles of women in the convention and at the Home Mission Board” (Anders & Metcalf-Whittaker, 1993, p. 212). The resolutions of the Southern Baptist Convention obviously did not do enough to deter the ordaining of women; therefore, in 2000, Southern Baptists took a bigger step. Leonard (2003) writes, “A revision of the Baptist Faith and Message in 2000 affirmed that women could not be ordained to the pastoral office” (p. 415). The Baptist Faith and Message is an adopted doctrinal statement. H. Leon McBeth (1979) describes the essence of this doctrinal statement, “It was designed as a statement of what a group of Baptists believe and practice at a given time in our history. In no way can it replace or supplement the authority of the Bible, nor was it so intended” (p. 23). The Baptist Faith and Message is not a creed, as Baptists are traditionally non-creedal people. However, the Baptist Faith and Message is the closest thing Southern Baptists have to a unifying creed. Therefore, changes to the Baptist Faith and Message were significant. The change in 2000 stating women should not be ordained as pastors was how the fundamentalists sect of the denomination made known their power and theology.

Ordination is not necessary to minister. It is a sacred rite of passage that should be afforded to Baptist women who feel called to ministry work. For some the ordination of women is a Biblical issue, for some a political one, for some a power struggle, and for some an issue of justice. Overall the ordination of women is an issue because of its sacredness and high regard within a religious tradition that values individual and local church freedoms. While the controversy of ordination is often clothed in Biblical reasoning on the conservative front, for moderates this controversy is an example of the conservative majority asserting power and detrimental to foundational freedoms.

Response

During the ordination controversy, Southern Baptist women struggled to make sense of their call and identity. Some chose to stay within the Southern Baptist tradition, others chose to leave. Southern Baptist churches also struggled to respond to the controversy.

Southern Baptist women struggled individually with ordination being such a hot-button issue. While some Southern Baptist women sought ordination, others chose to serve without ordination. While some Southern Baptist women sought respect and the official affirmation of ordination, they also struggled with desire to simply serve as they feel led by God, with or without formal acceptance and acknowledgment. According to Anders and Metcalf-Whittaker (1993),

Their symbolic importance is, in the eyes of ordained women and those who work closely with them, a problem at times. They do not want to be exhibited as emblems of anyone's theology. They want to work in church or denominational settings as ministers recognized for their abilities, not their gender. (p. 214)

Southern Baptist women ministers struggled with the line between being respected as women ministers and being respected for their giftedness and calling of God, despite their gender. Southern Baptist brought to the forefront of discussions, finally receiving recognition and inclusion, but in doing so were ridiculed, questioned, and challenged. Anders and Metchalf-Whittacker (1993) writes, “Ordained women are naturally controversial and symbolic, and they are aware of it” (p. 214). Southern Baptist women ministers were not just seen as ministers, but women ministers. While many sacrificed and struggled for this right, it added to the complexity and internal struggle of their ministry.

Southern Baptist women ministered without ordination for years (Bellinger, 1993, p. 130). Though different areas of service were opened and closed depending on the political climate of the convention, women served in ministry work and made a profound impact. “Leadership and ordination go hand in hand, but women have long exercised leadership without—in a vast majority of cases, at least—being ordained” (Morgan, 2003, p. 161). Withholding ordination prevented Southern Baptist women from certain roles and acknowledgements, but it did not prevent Southern Baptist women from doing ministry.

Some women ministers stayed in the Southern Baptist tradition while holding to some foundational freedoms—soul freedom and church freedom—soul freedom meaning their individual freedom as a believer to interpret God’s calling on their life for themselves and church freedom meaning the local church’s freedom to determine their own standards for polity and leadership. David Morgan (2003) says that those who

stayed “. . . have remained in Southern Baptist churches that have chosen to remain in the denomination while asserting their autonomy in defiance of the SBC’s banning women pastors at the 2000 convention in Orlando” (p. 161). Women who remained a part of the Southern Baptist tradition became comfortable with their calling and ministry and have found churches willing to exercise their freedom to choose their own leadership and act on their own behalf. For some women, this was not enough.

While some women stayed, and served in the Southern Baptist tradition, others retreated. Carolyn Blevins believes the mixed messages Southern Baptist were exposed to—messages of worthiness and giftedness based on being a child of God coupled with exclusion and oppression based on gender—created some hostility. For Blevins (2000) this hostility resulted in different responses,

Some of those women finally settled on another way to serve Southern Baptists and have made their peace with the realities. The sad truth is that many of those very frustrated, angry, hostile, dedicated, and bright women have either found places to serve in other denominations or have become agnostics. (p. 61)

Some women were angry and frustrated. Others were tired of waiting for respect and affirmation and began to seek other denominations to serve. Anders and Metcalf-Whittaker (1993) point out that even Addie Davis, the first women minister ordained in a Southern Baptist Church, “found her place of ministry as a pastor of an American Baptist congregation” (p. 211). “Davis pastored American Baptist churches for eighteen years, and then returned to her hometown of Covington, Virginia, and co-pastored an ecumenical church until her death in 2005” (Durso, 2013, p. 39). Some Southern Baptist women retreated from the Baptist tradition all together, and sought refuge and service in

other denominations—Presbyterian, Methodist, Disciples of Christ, and Lutheran, to name a few. According to Carolyn Blevins (1987),

In an era when the abilities of women are being used in virtually every facet of business, society, and government, Southern Baptists continue to limit themselves by restricting the activities of women. The result is a serious exodus from the SBC of gifted women and a growing number of women whose frustration is becoming anger. (p. 47)

Many Southern Baptist women were tired, frustrated and angry. For some of these women their fight turned into flight. Southern Baptist women retreated because were welcomed and affirmed in other churches and denominations without a fight. Southern Baptist women retreated because they did not want to be a part of a denomination with such history in regard to women in leadership.

While Southern Baptist women struggled to respond to the ordination controversy, so did Southern Baptist churches. Some churches choose to support the resolutions and changes within the Baptist Faith and Message to not ordain women. There were varying degrees of this response. Some churches did not allow women to serve in any ministry leadership position, while others allowed women to serve without ordination or an official title. Some women lead ministries and were on church staffs, but were called “directors” instead of “ministers.” Most of these positions were embraced in the traditionally accepted ministries for women—children, music and missions. Other churches disregarded the Southern Baptist Convention’s stance on the ordination of women and continued to ordain women as deacons and ministers, embracing their local church autonomy and freedom. Some of these churches continued to remain a part of the

Southern Baptist Convention, through financial support and partnership for missions and ministries. Some churches chose to dually align with the Southern Baptist Convention and other Baptist organizations, like the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, to remain connected to the traditional ministries and missions of the Southern Baptist Convention and also show support women in ministry. Once again, this response had varying degrees. Some churches decided to leave the Southern Baptist Convention. Some churches severed partnership with the convention and sought other avenues of affiliation, including but not limited to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Alliance of Baptists. Each of these responses were appropriate, because Baptist denomination affiliation falls under the church freedom ideal and is decided by the local church body.

For years women, especially women ministers and women in leadership, took an emotional and theological beating from the Southern Baptist Convention. The controversy surrounding the ordination of women was simply the most recent discouragement for women. Southern Baptist women struggled to make sense of their place and identity amid the controversy. Southern Baptist churches also struggled to find their place among the controversy. Some women and churches stayed connected to the Southern Baptist Convention, while others broke ties and searched for other affiliations.

Call

Whether Southern Baptist women have stayed or retreated, one thing remains clear, despite the history and fraction in regards to women in leadership and ministry, women in the Southern Baptist tradition continue to feel led by God to do the work of professional ministry. Anders and Metcalf-Whittaker (1993) writes,

Yet there are women who will continue to answer the personal call they feel. Ironically, it is a call about which they learned from the very denomination that now questions it. Southern Baptists believe that individuals should answer God's call, no matter who questions it, and that is what some women are doing and will continue to do. (p. 220)

Women continue to feel called by God to minister. This calling is so strong, Southern Baptist women continue to seek theological education and to serve in professional ministry inside and outside the Southern Baptist tradition. It is this call that remains a constant encourager. It is this call that keeps Southern Baptist women seeking for justice within their own denomination, the denomination that has taught them to follow God's call on their lives, unless this call points them toward the pulpit. This call is sacred and unique. It is this call that needs to be explored. It is the call that needs to be examined.

The reality is women have been oppressed within Southern Baptist history by being restricted or limited to certain roles and leadership with the church. Carolyn DeArmond Blevins (1987) writes in "Patterns of Ministry Among Southern Baptist Women,"

Many women are quite frustrated because their Sunday School teachers, mission teachers, Church Training leaders, and pastors have repeatedly told them to listen to and answer God's call. When that call turns out to be something the church has not expected, they are told women cannot minister that way. (p. 46)

This is the struggle many Southern Baptist women have felt, being called and gifted, but feeling resistance when they seek to fulfill that call.

Harry Leon McBeth is known for his work on the changing roles of women in Baptist history. In McBeth's (1979) history he mentions call once in telling a story of

young woman who enters his office (p. 96). “She was about twenty-four, attractive, single. Her gaze was direct and her voice steady when she said, ‘I feel God has called me into the ministry. I am here at Seminary to prepare to be a minister’” (McBeth, 1979, p. 96). His question was, “What would you say to her?” (McBeth, 1979, p. 96). In all of McBeth’s exploration and research, he presents history and controversy and even though this moment had such an impact on his thoughts, he did not explore the call of this woman in order to better understand its influence on her life. McBeth raises a great question and leaves open the door for research on the call experience.

In “The Role of Women in Church,” Ralph H Langley (1977) shares a personal story of his help in guiding a church through the ordination of a woman. He shares the struggles of the church, the committee, and Susan Sprague, the candidate for ordination. In the end, “it was the character and caliber and motives of Susan herself that overcame the doubts and established the confidence of our people in her and her high calling” (Langley, 1977, p. 67). Langley goes into detail about the roles of women in Judaism and the Greco-Roman world and the question of whether women should serve as ordained persons. However, even though it was the confidence of Susan’s calling that made a difference for her church in the process to ordain her, there was very little focus on Susan’s actual calling and personal story. Here again, the character and calling of Sprague made a difference for others, giving even more reason to research the stories and call experiences of Baptist women ministers.

While Southern Baptists have made resolutions and stands on the issue of women ministers, God continues to call and women continue to answer. Despite the controversy,

oppression and even hatred expressed, women in the Southern Baptist tradition have been gifted and encouraged to purpose ministry as a lifestyle and career. For these women, the call of God is bigger and stronger than the resolutions of men. For these women, the call of God is higher than denominational politics. For these women, the call is worth whatever obstacles are in their way.

Conclusion

Baptists in America were founded on the principle of religious freedom. Southern Baptists exercised that freedom when they formed their own denomination in response to disagreement with the Triennial Convention. The Southern Baptist Convention grew, but not without controversy. One of the major Southern Baptist controversies of the 20th century was the issue of women in leadership, especially women ministers and the matter of ordination. While women found places to serve in local churches, the denomination, and even formed their own structures and organizations for service, like the WMU and BWIM, they continued to struggle for respect and affirmation. Baptist women called to professional ministry faced their greatest struggle when the Southern Baptist Convention passed resolutions and changed the “Baptist Faith and Message” to clarify its stance against women ministers and specifically the ordination of women. Women and churches responded by adhering to the stance, ignoring the stance, or unaffiliating with the convention. While the Southern Baptist Convention deterred women from professional ministry, that did not stop women from feeling called to and pursuing professional ministry. Because the God’s call and women persisted, it needs to be explored. The call and response of Baptist women ministers amongst the controversy within the Southern

Baptist tradition reflect the foundational freedoms associated with Baptists and the emergence and influence of Feminist Theology. Facets of Baptist freedoms and Feminist Theology are explored in the next chapter in relation to the theoretical framework for this research.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The previous chapters have explored aspects of God's call and the history of women within the Southern Baptist tradition. This chapter details the theoretical framework in relation to this specific research on the call experiences of Baptist women in ministry. My framework is based on my identity as a Christian, grounded in my position in Baptist tradition, and influenced by aspects of Feminist Theology. A Christian, Baptist, and Feminist theoretical perspective is unique, complicated, and at times messy; however, it is an honest reflection of the specifics of the research and my context as a researcher. My reading, research, and writing are influenced by these aspects of my life and work and I cannot deny any of these parts of myself as a person or researcher. The goal of this chapter is to provide information about the major aspects of my framework; the basics of my Christian faith, the four freedoms associated with my Baptist identity, and the history, scholars, common themes, and facets that influence my feminist framework. Finally, I discuss the freedom, responsibility, and hope evident in all aspects of my complicated framework.

Christian

I am a Christian. My belief in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior is central in my life. My belief in God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit impacts everything I do and all that I am. I was raised within a Christian worldview, but this is not what made me a

follower of Christ. I have chosen personally to believe and follow Jesus Christ. My chosen Christian identity frames anything I read, write, or research. This aspect of my worldview and framework has been challenged, questioned, stretched, and strengthened during my research and time in this academic program. While I have been challenged with some of the harsh realities of belief and practice, my faith in Jesus Christ remains an integral part of my life and world.

A Christian perspective is important in researching calling. I believe God calls, speaks to, and seeks to lead all those who believe in God. The idea that God is at work in the world and in and through people has a great impact on my perspective as an individual, minister and researcher. My Christian identity is greatly impacted by the Baptist tradition in which I have chosen to live out my Christian life, which is why more time will be spent on detailing aspects of my Baptist framework. However, my identity as a child of God and follower of Christ is greater than my affiliation to any earthly denomination or organization.

Baptist

I am a Baptist. Within Christianity there are many different denominations and systems of belief and practice. As a believer and minister I have chosen to be a part of the Baptist tradition. Much of this choice was based on the foundational freedoms of the Baptist tradition: Bible Freedom, Soul Freedom, Church Freedom, and Religious Freedom. These four freedoms are presented by Walter B. Shurden in his book, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*. These freedoms inform my understanding of

what it means to be Baptist and aid in explaining the Baptist facet of my theoretical framework.

Four Fragile Freedoms

Walter B. Shurden's four fragile freedoms—Bible Freedom, Soul Freedom, Church Freedom, and Religious Freedom—highlight and support the individual relationship believers have with God. These freedoms are why there is so much diversity in Baptist belief and practice. Ironically a tradition that fundamentally cherishes the freedom of individuals and churches, also has a reputation of standing against the practice of these freedoms. For example, Baptists emphasize Bible Freedom, Soul Freedom, and Church Freedom; however, the Southern Baptist Convention is known for taking a stand against women in church leadership and professional ministry. While “Baptists” have the reputation of not accepting women as ministers, it is important to understand that not all “Baptists” are alike. While the Southern Baptist tradition has played an important role in denying the calling of Baptist women to professional ministry, Baptist theology, based on the four freedoms, encourages individual believers to seek God and serve God in ways they feel led. As Walter Shurden (2013) writes in his famous work, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*, “The Baptist passion for freedom is a major reason why there is so much diversity in Baptist life” (p. 2). Some Christians in the Baptist tradition would not even think to study such a topic as Baptist women in ministry, based on their personal beliefs and framework. However, it is because of my Baptist framework that I have chosen to focus on Baptist women in ministry and their call experiences. The faith and lives of these women are a reflection of their own Baptist framework. I am a Christian

and have chosen to serve and live my Christian faith within the Baptist tradition. This tradition challenges and enhances my life, faith, and work. William Shurden's four freedoms of the Baptist identity greatly influence my life and faith and are an integral part of my framework for this research.

Shurden's four fragile freedoms are an attempt to clarify common and core beliefs of Baptists despite the diversity within Baptist tradition. In the previous chapter, much of the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention around the role of women within the church was discussed. This is not the only controversy and diversity of thought and practice that has plagued Southern Baptist life. According to Shurden (2013), controversy is almost expected in a tradition that values freedom, as he writes,

The controversy that has shaken the Southern Baptist Convention for the last twelve years is one of the most recent examples of Baptist diversity. While diversity is threatening to some and downright devastating to others, it flows naturally from the Baptist preoccupation with the right of choice. (p. 3)

Essentially, Shurden believes diversity and controversy are par for the course when the rights of the individual believer and local church are so highly valued. Shurden does not argue the four freedoms make beliefs and practice easy; he simply seeks to share common beliefs of Baptists despite the diversity of belief and practice.

Walter Shurden did not come to these four freedoms in a vacuum of his own Baptist beliefs, traditions and principles. He sought a wide view of Baptists. Shurden (2013), explains his process in this way:

I arrived at these Baptist Freedoms by analyzing the sermons and addresses by Baptists from around the world at the meetings of the Baptist World Alliance

from 1905 to 1980. My conviction is that the Baptist World Alliance is the best place to look if one wants to mark major Baptist distinctives. (p. 5)

In Shurden's opinion these four freedoms paint a picture of a Baptist profile. These freedoms hold at their foundation the Baptist principle of the priesthood of believers. These freedoms are held in high regard by many Baptists. Shurden's freedoms are an important part of my theoretical framework for this research project and will be discussed in further detail.

Bible freedom. The Bible is important to the Christian faith in general, not just to Baptists. As Shurden (2013) reminds us, we as Baptists have a no more special connection or ownership of the Bible than any other Christian faith (p. 9). The Bible was written, translated, canonized, read, and interpreted for centuries before Baptists even came into the Christian fold. Baptists have been known for their devotion to the holy scriptures found in the Bible; however, their understanding and devotion was passed down through Christian tradition. Shurden (2013) writes, "Baptists believe fervently in the authority of scripture, but for that we can say thanks to Martin Luther" (p. 9). Martin Luther was famous for his *95 Theses*, which he posted on the Wittenberg Church door. This thesis was part of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant Reformation had a great effect on the Christian church and believers, especially in their view of organized church and the individual relationship with God.

The Bible is not an exclusively Baptist work. Baptists are not the only Christian tradition influenced by and devoted to the understanding of the Bible. However, like many Christian traditions, Baptists view the Bible as an important facet of the faith.

Therefore, the Baptist view of the Bible, especially in regards to Bible freedom, is important to understanding the Baptist framework I research from in regards to this project on the call experiences of Baptist women ministers.

Walter B. Shurden (2013) defines Bible Freedom in this manner,

BIBLE FREEDOM is the historic Baptist affirmation that the Bible, under the Lordship of Christ, must be central in the life of the individual and church and that Christians, with the best and most scholarly tools of inquiry, are both free and obligated to study and obey the Scripture. (p. 5)

For Baptists, Bible Freedom means reading and studying of the Bible are important for individuals and churches, and should be done with diligence and respect. Bible Freedom also means individual believers and the church are free to read and interpret the Bible for themselves. Baptists believe the Bible is the authority on matters life and faith. As Shurden (2013) writes, “It is the final authority in moral responsibility, in theological beliefs, and in human relationships” (p. 13). While the Bible is the authority, Shurden (2013) argues, “but human understanding of the Bible is never final or completed or finished” (p. 9). The Baptist principle of Bible Freedom is not intended to examine the Bible as a stagnant book of faith, but rather a work of faith that must be continually studied through the direction of the Holy Spirit. For Baptist individuals and churches, Bible freedom means that reading and interpreting the Bible is open to all believers guided by the Holy Spirit. This freedom and the others champion the Baptist belief of the priesthood of believers. This concept dates back to ideas from the Protestant Reformation. The idea of the priesthood of the believer embraces the belief that all believers can interpret scripture, interact with God, and minister in the church and the

world without the permission or guidance of a priest; therefore, each believer functions as his or her own priest. This concept is important for each of the freedoms. According to Susan Shaw (2008), in her book, *God Speaks to Us Too: Southern Baptist Women on Church, Home and Society*, “The priesthood of believers means that individuals have the freedom to come to their own understandings of scripture” (p. 253). Bible Freedom is an important element of the Baptist identity and also one of the reasons Baptist individuals and churches are so diverse.

Bible Freedom is a facet of Baptist tradition that has allowed for different interpretations of the Bible and has therefore added to the conflict amongst Baptists. As Shaw (2008) puts it, “Of course, this (the responsibility of the individual to interpret scripture) also means that Southern Baptists will always have disagreements about what the Bible says” (p. 253). Specifically, different interpretations and understandings of women in the Bible have stirred controversy in Baptist life, especially Southern Baptist life. One example is 1 Corinthians 14:34-35:

women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (1 Corinthians 14:34-35, New Revised Standard Version)

Some conservatives interpret these verses to declare women should be silent in church, and in turn, women should not lead Bible teaching or worship within the church.

Moderates, however, read this passage in context of a letter written specifically to the church at Corinth within a context where women typically did not participate in religious leadership, and therefore not applicable specifically to women ministers in our time. This

is an example of the difficulty in Bible Freedom; the same passage can be read and interpreted differently.

Walter Shurden's presentation of Bible Freedom is not to be viewed as an invitation to a free-for-all for Baptists when it comes to reading, interpreting and teaching the Bible. According to Shurden (2013), personal Biblical interpretation is a "privilege" and "hard work" (p. 20). From Shurden's (2013) perspective, "To understand the Bible, one should know something about the history *of* the Bible, the history *within* the Bible, and good principles for interpreting the Bible today" (p. 20). Bible Freedom assumes diligent reading and interpretation for oneself, not interpretation simply based on the indoctrination of tradition. Bible Freedom also assumes the reader understands the privilege it is to read and interpret scripture and in understanding treats the Bible with the respect and honor it deserves.

Two main principles of Shurden's Bible Freedom are reading and interpreting the Bible with an understanding of the context in which the scriptures were written and reading and interpreting through the power of the Holy Spirit. The reality is, this type of research is not possible without Bible Freedom and the Baptists who have read and interpreted the Bible differently from tradition. Another reality is, while many use scripture to deter women ministers, others use it to encourage women ministers. This part of my theoretical framework allows me, as a Christian and Baptist, to read and interpret scripture for myself, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to determining God's call and the role of women in ministry. This piece of my framework also challenges me, knowing there are other Baptists who hold the Bible in the same high

regard who will disagree with my personal interpretation. Bible freedom allows for this tension.

Soul freedom. Where Bible Freedom allows for individual believers to read and interpret scripture for themselves, Soul Freedom allows for individual believers to connect and relate to God and make life decisions on their own behalf. Shurden's (2013) definition is, "SOUL FREEDOM is the historical affirmation of the inalienable right and responsibility of every person to deal with God without the imposition of creed, the interference of clergy, or the intervention of civil government" (p. 5). Traditionally Baptists affirm the individual believer, as Baptists celebrate every person as a creation of God (Shurden, 2013, p. 24). As Susan Shaw (2008) writes, "At the root of Baptist identity is the notation that each person can go directly to God without the need of a mediator" (p. 249). Shurden (2013) points out that even Jesus asked for his disciples to reflect on their own belief in him, when he asked, "But who do you say that I am?" in Matthew 16:15 (pp. 23–25). This is the essence of Soul Freedom.

In Baptist life, the value of individual faith is seen in the understanding and practice of faith, specifically communication with God, salvation, and baptism. Before the Protestant reformation, the Roman Catholic theology ruled that "theology taught that God's grace was centered in the church and mediated through the sacraments by the priests" (Shurden, 2013, p. 25). Baptists joined the tradition of the Reformation that encouraged individual believers to go before God "personally, directly, and voluntarily" (Shurden, 2013, p. 25). Baptist tradition encourages believers to communicate with God through personal prayer when they feel the need. Baptist tradition also allows for the

repentance and forgiveness of sins without confession to a priest, as individuals are encouraged to relate directly to God in faith matters. The salvation experience embraces individual Soul Freedom, as people are encouraged to come to the faith in their own time. “Soul Freedom affirms the sacredness of individual choice” (Shurden, 2013, p. 23). It is the individual’s choice to accept the Christian faith, and no one should be forced to believe, because forcing someone to believe tears away their Soul Freedom. Embracing Soul Freedom means embracing a variety of religious experiences. There is no one way to experience salvation; for example, not all will experience a Paul on the Damascus Road moment. Soul Freedom is evident in the Baptist belief in believer’s baptism. The first known “Baptists,” John Smyth and Thomas Helwys questioned infant baptism, as infants could not choose the faith for themselves. John Smyth baptized himself to emphasize believer’s baptism (Shurden, 2013, p. 30). Baptism in Baptist life is a symbolic of an individual’s belief and faith in Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior. Soul Freedom embraces and individual’s relationship with God through the ability to communicate with God on a personal level and the ability to make faith decisions for themselves.

Baptist Soul Freedom encourages individual believers to be active in and take responsibility for their own faith. Soul Freedom allows believers to interact with God on a personal level. This personal relationship allows for individuals to interpret God’s movement in their own lives. For Baptist women ministers, Soul Freedom allows for a personal interpretation of God’s call. As stated in the earlier chapter, it is hard for Baptists who uphold these traditional freedoms to argue with an individual believer in

Christ when it comes to his or her personal understanding of God working in his or her life. Soul Freedom is why the stories of these women involved in this research are so important. The stories of these women highlight their Soul Freedom and the processing of that freedom in relation to God's call on their lives.

Church freedom. Traditional Baptist freedoms focus not only on the individual believer, but also on the community of faith known as the church. Church Freedom emphasizes local church autonomy.

CHURCH FREEDOM is the historic Baptist affirmation that local churches are free, under the Lordship of Christ, to determine their membership and leadership, to order their worship and work to ordain whom they perceive as gifted for ministry, male or female, and to participate in the larger Body of Christ, of whose unity and mission Baptists are proudly a part. (Shurden, 2012, p. 5)

Church Freedom allows for local churches to make their own decisions when it comes to polity, leadership and ministry, once again through the lens of Christ. This is another reason why there are varied representations of "Baptist" in the religious world. This is also the reason saying something or someone is "Baptist" should raise more questions than answers. However, because of the prominence and dominance of the Southern Baptist Convention in recent American history, "Baptist" has become known to many as a certain type of Christian, which because of Church Freedom, is not representative of all Baptists. Church Freedom elevates the local church, made up of individuals who have Bible Freedom and Soul Freedom. Church Freedom includes the individual's right to associate with a local church, the church's right to govern within, the right to worship freely, and the right to minister as gifts and needs lead.

The Baptist tradition comes out of the Free Church Tradition, meaning Baptists embrace the idea that believers can freely associate with the community of faith they wish and each community of faith is free to practice that faith without the structure of a hierarchy to determine faith and practice on the local level (Shurden, 2013, pp. 34–35). This freedom also emphasizes an individual's right to choose to be part of the church. This is because many Baptists “came out of a culture where one was ‘born’ into the church” (Shurden, 2013, p. 35). It was important for Baptists that individuals make a personal choice to follow Jesus Christ, not just be born into the faith. Therefore, an individual has the freedom to choose Christ as Lord and Savior and the freedom to choose a church to associate with to live out that faith within a community of believers. Church Freedom and the right to associate also allows the local church the freedom to associate or not associate with ministry organizations and partners. While the Southern Baptist Convention and other Baptist organizations have created networks of association, including state and regional levels, within the free church tradition, these partnerships are not required, but are set up to aid the local church minister. “Each church is autonomous; it makes its own decisions about leadership, membership, and participation in other Baptist bodies” (Shaw, 2008, p. 254). Church Freedom allows individual believers to choose their community of faith. Church Freedom also allows individual churches to choose what organizations and ministries to associate with or not to associate at all.

Church Freedom also emphasizes the local church's right to govern itself. This philosophy of church polity is known as “congregational church government” (Shurden, 2013, p. 37). This type of church government does not place authority in the hands of an

outside higher being, or just one or a few people within the church, but instead authority is shared by all members of the church body (Shurden, 2013, p. 37). As Susan Shaw (2008) writes, “No matter what the Southern Baptist Convention proclaims or does, the local church is still completely free to chart its own course” (p. 254). While this notion is true, the Southern Baptist Convention, some state conventions, and regional associations show a disregard for Church Freedom by banning and/or disassociating with some local churches based on their beliefs and practices. While many Baptist churches follow similar organization and leadership models, each church has the freedom to choose its own model. This freedom allows churches to choose their leadership, including church leaders and ministers. This freedom seeks to elevate the freedom of each individual, by allowing them a say in church decisions and practice. This freedom is why some churches affirm women in leadership and women ministers and others do not. Church Freedom allows each individual congregation to make its own decisions, which is why so many Baptist churches, even though they share the identity of these freedoms, may function very differently.

Freedom to worship is included in the idea of Church Freedom. For the Baptist tradition, there is no set form or liturgy of worship for all churches to follow; each church has the right to personalize worship. “The Baptist freedom for worship aims at an authentic spiritual offering being presented to God” (Shurden, 2013, p. 40). The result is many different styles of worship. Some Baptist churches are liturgical and structured, some are more contemporary and informal. Some churches seek for a blended version of worship, while some offer both styles of worship. Because of the ideas of Bible Freedom and Soul

Freedom, Baptists affirm the right of all people to be involved in the preparing, leading, and participation in worship. Two ordinances are celebrated by most Baptist churches during worship: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Shurden, 2013, p. 41). Once again, while Baptists agree these ordinances are to be celebrated by believers, they may be practiced differently among local Baptist churches. The Lord's Supper can take many different forms, while the focus is always the celebration of God's love for us in the sacrifice of Christ. Believer's baptism by immersion is the common practice of Baptist churches. However, some churches accept members who have been baptized in other church traditions because the main concern is that the person is a follower of Christ. The freedom to worship authentically as a church is important for Baptists. This freedom allows for many different styles and means of worship within the larger Baptist tradition.

The Baptist concept of Church Freedom also includes the freedom for believers to be part of the ministry of the church and the freedom for the local church to discern how their ministries and missions take form. Once again, this aspect of Church Freedom plays on another freedom, Soul Freedom. As Shurden (2013) states, "Every believer is on equal footing with every other believer in the local Baptist church" (p. 42). While pastors offer leadership and guidance within the local church, traditionally Baptists support the doctrine of the priesthood of believers. In the Baptist tradition, all believers are encouraged to be a part of the ministry of the local church and ministers in the world, in the ways they feel led by God. This concept has taken many forms and emphases over the years. Some Baptist churches and individuals have focused on evangelism; others have focused on ministering to the needs of people. However, with Church Freedom

each church has the autonomy to choose its own ministry and missions plans, concepts, and practices, while encouraging all believers to be a part of the work of Christ and the church in the world.

Church Freedom celebrates the local church and the individual believers who form the local church. Church Freedom emphasizes free association for individuals and churches, freedom to govern, freedom to worship, and freedom to minister, all under the leadership of Christ. The Baptist distinctive of Church Freedom and the diversity it entails is part of the Baptist identity.

Religious freedom. The Baptist ideal of Religious Freedom goes back to the beginning of the Baptist tradition. “John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, trailblazers of the Baptist tradition in early 17th-century England, launched the Baptist denomination with no uncertain sound on issues of liberty” (Shurden, 2013, p. 47). Smyth and Helwys were supporters of the separation of church and state movement. Around the same time, Roger Williams and others were working for religious liberty in America (Shurden, 2013, p. 49). Religious Freedom is a part of the Baptist framework. Shurden (2013) defines Religious Freedom as “the historic Baptist affirmation of freedom *OF* religion, freedom *FOR* religion, and freedom *FROM* religion, insisting that Caesar is not Christ and Christ is not Caesar” (p. 5). This freedom and its definition are based on the convictions of the founders of the Baptist faith, who knew the cost of life, faith, and government without religious liberty.

The idea of Religious Freedom plays on the other freedoms. Shurden (2013) explains,

Religious liberty is also based on the biblical view of persons. Created in the image of God, a human being is the crowning work of God's creation (Ps 8). Human personality is sacred and life's highest value. To deny freedom of conscience to any person is to debase God's creation. (p. 49)

Religious Freedom allows for individuals to interpret the Bible, commune with God, and practice their faith freely. Religious Freedom calls attention that authentic faith is a faith freely chosen and freely practiced.

Shurden (2013) explains three dimensions of religious freedom: commitment to complete religious liberty, religious liberty for all people, and separation of church and state (p. 50). Religious Freedom exists when these dimensions are embraced and respected; however, when they are not, the idea of Religious Freedom becomes blurred. Commitment to religious liberty is more than tolerance; it is a genuine belief in the freedom of religious belief and practice and the ability to coexist in a realm of differing beliefs and practices Religious liberty for all people is an understanding that individuals are free to choose their religious affiliation or to choose no affiliation at all. Shurden (2013) explains the separation of church and state as "a free church in a free state" (p. 51). The church and state exist side by side, not one over the other or even with each other, but exist in the same places. As Shurden (2013) so passionately writes, "When the cross of Jesus is wrapped in the flag of any nation, danger, if not downright heresy, is close by" (p. 53). Religious Freedom says Christ was not American and America is not Christian. Religious Freedom includes all three of these dimensions. However, Religious Freedom has been misused and misunderstood by many Baptists, lines have been blurred and power has been at work. As Susan Shaw (2008) so eloquently writes,

As Southern Baptists have amassed political power, many of them seem to have forgotten the time when Baptists themselves were persecuted as a religious minority—a time when other religious groups held political power and determined law and policy based on their beliefs. (p. 260)

During Baptist beginnings, Religious Freedom was attractive because Baptist-thinking theologians and believers were being oppressed by the state; however, as Baptists in America have come to be a dominant denomination, Religious Freedom has been viewed differently (Shurden, 2013, pp. 52–53). Religious Freedom allows for different religious beliefs and practices for all people, even when they are different from the Baptist way. While some Baptists are comfortable with this, others are not. Religious Freedom calls us back to Baptist beginnings. Religious Freedom calls us back to the other identifiable freedoms of the Baptist faith.

Conclusion

William Shurden's work, *The Baptist Identity*, focuses on four freedoms that help clarify what it means to be Baptist. While Shurden (2013) hesitates to define the Baptist identity in one word, if he had to choose, the word would be "freedom" (p. 56).

Shurden's ideas of Bible Freedom, Soul Freedom, Church Freedom, and Religious Freedom have been formative to understanding my personal Baptist identity. My Baptist identity is a part of my theoretical framework for this research project, especially since the project focuses on Baptist women ministers serving in Baptist contexts. Shurden's four freedoms help to define and present my own understanding of what it means to have a Baptist framework.

While Shurden's freedoms help to clarify my understanding of a Baptist framework, these freedoms also complicate my framework. These freedoms allow for research and work in the area of women in ministry, even in a tradition that has oppressed women. These freedoms allow for such study because as followers of Christ, the women involved in the study and I have the freedom to read and interpret scripture for ourselves (Bible Freedom), communicate with God and discern God's call (Soul Freedom), and associate and minister with Baptist churches who support women in ministry (Church Freedom), while understanding other Baptists exercising their freedoms may believe differently. Freedom within Baptist tradition allows for women to see themselves as a part of the redemptive work of Christ, allows for women to answer the call of God and choose to minister in professional and formal ways, and allows churches to affirm (and deny) women as leaders and ministers in the local church context. These four freedoms frame my understanding of the Baptist identity; therefore, also frame my research on the call experiences of Baptist women ministers.

Feminist Theology

My theoretical framework is also influenced by facets of feminist theology. I am a Baptist woman. It is obvious that my gender reflects my framework simply based on my research interest in the call experiences, specifically of, Baptist women in ministry. As a woman and person of faith, feminist theology is a part of my research framework. Natalie K. Watson (2003), in her work, *Feminist Theology*, formulates a concise definition of Feminist Theology:

Feminist theology is the critical, contextual, constructive, and creative rereading and rewriting of Christian theology. It regards women—their bodies, perspectives, and experiences—as relevant to the agenda of Christian theologians and advocates them as subjects of theological discourses and as full citizens of the church. (pp. 2–3)

Feminist theology encourages women of faith to reread, reinterpret, and rewrite Christian theology. Therefore, feminist theology is an important part of my theoretical framework. However, feminist theology covers a wide spectrum of thought, belief, and practice. As it is difficult to articulate specifications of what it means to be “Baptist,” it is just as difficult to specify what “Feminist Theology” means. Feminist theology makes women a crucial part of the Christian tradition. It recognizes that women have been largely excluded from Christian history and seeks a transformation of theology and practice. In the opinion of Susan Shaw (2014), a woman theologian with Southern Baptist roots, “Feminist theology also moves women’s experiences to the center of theological reflection and calls for the religious, social, economic, and political liberation of women” (p. 128). While women have served in many aspects of ministry in the Baptist tradition there still remains a stigma when it comes to women serving in professional ministry. There are still barriers that keep women from answering the call and serving as ministers. This is why a feminist theology perspective is important—there are still changes to be made in relation to the idea of women ministers in the Baptist tradition. A study of the call experiences of Baptist women in ministry is framed around the idea that Baptist women are “subjects of theological discourses” and “full citizens of the church.” My personal study regards Baptist women ministers as important to God and important to the Baptist tradition. While the goal of this chapter is not to give an exhaustive history and

explanation of feminist theology, I seek to give an overview of feminist theology and indicate three specific tenets of feminist theology that frame my research perspective.

History and Scholars

In order to understand how feminist theology frames my research, first one must have some background on feminist theology. Feminist theology grew out of feminist theory. “Arising out of feminist consciousness and feminist political and social action, feminist theory recognizes the systemic oppression of women and encourages women to name their oppression and to ponder its sources” (Young, 1990, pp. 11–12). Feminist theory focuses on the systematic oppression of women, while feminist theology focuses on the specific oppression of women within religious history, thought, tradition, academia, and church life and structure.

As Watson (2003) writes,

Feminist theory, then, analyzes the situation of women in society and the factors that shape the lives and images of women. It seeks to develop a critical and transformative praxis that enables women’s liberation. Feminist theology (though to a limited extent) draws on feminist theory as a resource for developing its own critical discourses, new narratives, and practices of faith. (p. 24)

Feminist theology applies the foundations of feminist theory to the field of religious study and faith practice, with focus on Christian tradition and women. “Feminist theologians are in constant dialogue with the Christian tradition” (Watson, 2003, p. 3). Feminist theology is not about throwing away all that is Christian tradition; it is about creating an honest, open, and critical dialogue with Christian tradition from the perspective of women. It is different from traditional patriarchal theologies because it

brings women to the front of thought and discussion. As Linda Hogan (1997) writes in her book, *From Women's Experience to Feminist Theology*, "Women's experience is one of the central interpretive categories in feminist theory and consequently in feminist theology" (p. 16). The elevation of women's experience comes from the understanding that women have been left out, or "only half of the story has been told" (Loades, 1990, p. 2). Feminist theory and theology seeks to right that wrong. Feminist theology draws on feminist theory and Christian tradition to create a new way of thinking and doing theology, keeping women's experience at the forefront. The following focuses on the first and second waves of feminism and some prominent scholars of each.

First wave. In America, the feminist movement rose as a byproduct of the abolitionist movement. Women were influential in the fight to end slavery in America. As women began to be involved in the fight for the rights of slaves, they realized their right to fight against their own oppression at the hand of male domination (Ruther, 2002, p. 6). While the focus of the first wave of the feminist movement was the right to vote, these pioneers also fought for education and employment. Their efforts did not go in vain. This first wave of feminism (1840s–1920s) gave way to some liberation for women including "access to higher education, property rights, and the vote in the United States" (Ruther, 2002, p. 6). Out of this 19th century rise of women fighting for their own rights and voices in the public arena, Rosemary Radford Ruether (2002), names some of the key women including, "Sara Grimke ('Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women,' 37), Lucretia Mott (*Sermons*, 1840–79), and Elizabeth Cady Station (especially *The Woman's Bible*, 1985)" (p. 6). These women wrote and spoke

passionately as they fought for equality for women in these early years of feminist thought.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Of these women, Elizabeth Cady Stanton is best known for her publication of *The Woman's Bible*. While “feminist theology” as a formal practice had not yet been named, there were women, like Stanton, who saw the oppression of women in the religious tradition and sought to name it and seek transformation. Stanton was raised in the Presbyterian church, but also had experience with revivalism, and Unitarianism. She had a background and knowledge of Christian theology, but was not scared of looking critically at the Christian tradition, hence her work in Feminist Theology (Ruth Page, 1990, pp. 19–20). *The Woman's Bible* was first published at the end of the 19th century, as women began to explore new roles within and outside of the church (Pui-lan, 2002, p. 25). Stanton published this groundbreaking work at the age of 18 (Loades, 1990, p. 14). “The basic point was to attack all those who used the Bible to condemn women to secondary status” (Loades, 1990, pp. 14–15). Stanton worked with a team to revise parts of the Bible that referred to women and excluded women (Page, 1990, p. 19). Stanton's daring move to criticize the traditional Bible narrative in such a powerful way was based on her disdain for those who used the Bible to continue the view of women as second-class citizens (Page, 1990, p. 18). The book was a great achievement and a great controversy. Elizabeth Cady Stanton received mixed reviews, and “though remembered, lost her standing in the women's rights movement due to the controversy provoked by her contention that biblical texts detrimental to women were created by man, not God” (Christ, 2002, p. 80). Even fellow feminist reformers

viewed Stanton as over-zealous (Page, 1990, p. 16). As stated in the earlier chapter in regards to the history of Southern Baptist women, many Baptist women were fearful of the Feminist Theology movement and passionate women like Stanton. Despite the mixed opinions of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, she is still viewed as one of the influential pioneers in the early American feminist movement who focused on Christian ideals, practice, and theology, and as an example of the tenacity that began and continues to guide the movement.

Second wave. Following the first wave of feminism, it was many years before another major feminist effort rose in the American scene. According to Susan Shaw (2010), after the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 feminism entered a quiet phase and returned in the 1960s, “. . . feminism reemerged as a visible political force, challenging patriarchal constraints and redefining widely assumed constructions of womanhood and gender” (p. 7). The Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote. Once again, this wave of feminism was encouraged by the climate of American Culture. Rosemary Radford Ruether (2002) attributes the reemergence to discussion brought about by the civil rights and anti-war movements and more women involved in theological education and ministry (p. 7). Once again women were fighting for the rights of others and realized the power they had to fight for their own. The second wave of feminism focused on equal rights, political participation, and re-thinking women’s roles. Because of the opportunities opened in the first wave, more women were seeking education, even in the theology realm. Because women were a part of theological education, feminism became more a part of theological education. According to Ruether (2002),

The growing presence of women as students, ministers, and teachers in churches meant that feminism had to be translated into feminist theology. Women in these teaching and ministerial roles had to engage in critique and reconstruction of a tradition that had historically excluded them and justified their exclusion theologically, in order to mandate their own new includes and leadership. (p. 7)

The addition of women to theological education, and in turn, theology was a catalyst for feminist theology. “As more women entered theological education, they began to critique the foundations of biblical scholarship and theology” (Shaw, 2014, p. 183). While feminist theology was present in the first wave of feminism, feminist theology truly emerged as a discipline in this second wave.

Mary Daly. Natalie Watson (2003) attributes the start of a structured feminist theology to Mary Daly and her work, *The Church and the Second Sex* (p. 23). Daly explored the ramifications of the Catholic emphasis on the self-sacrificing woman on women of faith. Daly also explored the idea of God as male and the assumptions of faith and practice when we view God as male (Anderson, 2002, p. 43). According to Daly, a masculine character of God creates and reinforces a male-dominated culture and society (Hogan, 1997, p. 27). For Daly, women (and men) were conditioned and taught to be viewed and view themselves as a second sex due to the dominance and effects of a patriarchal society. A favorite story uncovered in research is shared in *Feminist Theology: A Reader*, edited by Ann Loades (1990),

By the time Mary Daly came to preach in Harvard on 14 November 1971 (the first time a woman had preached at a Sunday sermon in Harvard’s 336-year history, to a congregation that included women training for ministry), she proclaimed her irritation with the repetition of the line quoted by would-be pacifiers of women, of which, as she rightly said, *even if* in Christ there is no male

and female (that used to shut them up) everywhere else there damn well is. (p. 186)

Because of her disillusionment with the patriarchal nature of Christianity and her belief there was no hope for change within the institutional church, Mary Daly adopted a separatist ideal of feminist theology (Hogan, 1997, p. 52). This led to Daly's "conclusion that Christianity and patriarchy were so intimately linked that it was time for women to leave Christianity behind" (Christ, 2002, p. 80). Mary Daly was audacious and often viewed as too negative in regards to her approach to feminist theology. She has been criticized by some for her disdain and neglect of the institutional Christian church. Some feminist theologians seek to focus more on the hope for transformation, and the rereading and rewriting with a focus on women, rather than on the disregarding altogether, of Christianity. Mary Daly eventually did leave the Christian church (Watson, 2003, p. 22). While Mary Daly may have mixed reviews from other feminists, her influence on feminist theology cannot be ignored.

Elizabeth Shüssler Fiorenza. Another feminist who emerged as an influential presence in feminist theology was Elizabeth Shüssler Fiorenza. Fiorenza is most known for her work *In Memory of Her*. The book is titled after the unnamed woman mentioned in the Gospels who anoints Jesus. Fiorenza's alternate interpretation of this story gives great insight to her own feminist theology. In her eyes this story, though taught by Jesus to be one to be told wherever the Gospel is preached, is less told than the stories of the disciples surrounding Jesus' capture and persecution.

In Memory of Her has an immensely powerful introduction, by way of reconsidering the story in the second Gospel of the woman who anoints Jesus' head, a prophetic sign-action which, despite Jesus' words, did not become part of our inheritance in the way other Gospel stories have done, it is something that is stayed as a part of the canonical text, but whereas the name and more of the story of the disciples who betrayed Jesus are retold, not so that of this faithful woman. "And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." (Loades, 1990, p. 47)

Elizabeth Fiorenza's prominent work introduced a different way of critically studying biblical scriptures, a feminist biblical hermeneutic. In Fiorenza's opinion, if one reads the New Testament carefully, one realizes women were active in the early church, even though most traditional interpretations view women as only a modest part (Ross, 2002, p. 277). Fiorenza's feminist theology is based on an intent "to reconstruct early Christian history as *women's* history, thus restoring women's stories, and also to reclaim this history as the history of both women and men" (Loades, 1990, pp. 47-48). She does not want to overlook the male dominated history and heritage of Christian tradition, theology and interpretation (Hogan, 1997, p. 88). While she acknowledges the idea that scripture has been used to oppress women within religious contexts, she also sees hope in a feminist view of scripture to change the view of women in scripture and in the future of religious tradition. Elizabeth Shüssler Fiorenza is also known for her support of the idea of women-church (ekklesia gynaikon). The women-church idea promoted equality among believers, especially in church leadership. This concept is a manifestation of Fiorenza's focus on women's liberation as an integral piece in biblical interpretation (Hogan, 1997, p. 89). While Fiorenza is often challenged for her stance on feminist biblical interpretation, her work is respected, as evidenced in 1987 when she "became the

first woman President of the Society of Biblical Literature” (Loades, 1990, p. 15).

Fiorenza is optimistic that even though Scripture had been used by a patriarchal tradition to oppress women, a feminist biblical hermeneutic helps to advocate for women and promote change in Christian tradition. Elizabeth Shüssler Fiorenza was a prominent voice in cultivating feminist biblical interpretation and continues to be an influential voice in feminist theology.

Rosemary Radford Reuther. One final second-wave feminist theologian I will mention is Rosemary Radford Reuther. Reuther, like other feminist theologians, sought to reevaluate scripture and tradition from women’s perspectives. According to Linda Hogan, “Feminist theology as done by Reuther, then, is engaged in a constant reappraisal of Scripture and tradition from the perspective of contemporary women’s experience” (Hogan, 1997, 110). Reuther has written many books and hundreds of articles (Wiesner, 1999, p. 135). One of her papers was delivered in 1971 at the American Academy of Religion. She worked with Mary Daly in instituting a women’s caucus at the event. Both delivered papers in 1971. These papers are important because they were some of the first of their kind in such a setting (Armstrong, 1990, p. 83). According to Merry Wiesner (1990), her writings focus on,

the question of Christian credibility, with particular attention to ecclesiology and its engagement with Church-world conflicts; on Jewish-Christian relationships (‘anti-Semitism is the left hand of Christology’); on politics and religion in America; as well as in feminism and feminist theology. (p. 135).

In her works, Rosemary Radford Ruether also focuses on the institution of the church.

While recognizing the devotion, women have to traditional Christian institutions, she

“denies that institutional churches have a monopoly on truth, salvation, and grace” (Wiesner, 1990, p. 137). It is in this dualism of respect for Christian tradition and institutions and the trouble with the systematic oppression caused by these traditions and institutions, that many feminist theologians struggle within. Reuther is also known for her work in the doctrine of *imago Dei*, meaning “like God.” The purpose of this doctrine was to open up the traditional understanding of God, women, and creation (Fulkerson, 1997, p. 108). In the words of Mary McClintock Fulkerson (1997), “The feminist appeal to *imago Dei* becomes, then, affirmation that the world is divided into two kinds of people, and what we want is respect for both kinds” (p. 109). Rosemary Radford Reuther works to make women’s experience important to Christian tradition and points out places where scripture, tradition, and experience disagree. As Wiesner (1990) articulates, “She works, one could say, to do something about the intolerable disjunction between talk of redemptive community and actual lived experience” (as cited in Loades, 1990, p. 136). Ruether, like Daly and Fiorenza, was influential in the formation of feminist theology as a discipline within religious education, thought, and practice.

Diversity in feminist theology. These three women are just a sampling of the women who worked to explore and create feminist theology as an accepted part of religious education, theory, and practice. All three of these women came from the Catholic tradition. Many Catholic women responded to the appeal of feminist theology because even though their tradition worked to create space for women, they often felt rejected when it came to formal leadership and ministry (Watson, 2003, p. 22). However, feminist theology is not limited to this tradition. According to Watson (2003), “Feminist

theology seeks to transcend the boundaries that restrict conventional patriarchal theology” (p. 23). The World Council of Churches has been an encouraging space for women and feminist theology for Protestant women and churches. The World Council of Churches is an ecumenical movement that seeks to include and bring together diverse Protestant traditions. A woman wrote the first message for the Assembly of WCC. The WCC encouraged churches to give women more opportunities to serve and provided opportunities for women to organize and discuss women’s issues (Watson, 2003, p. 23). Feminist theology, while not limited to a specific Christian tradition, is also not limited to a certain race or ethnicity. While most of the first women who arose in American feminist theology were from main-line, American religious traditions, feminist theology has grown to include diverse perspectives including African, Latin American, Asian, and Indian to name a few (Ruether, 2002, pp. 15–18). Feminist theology is a large discipline that includes many different perspectives and religious traditions. Therefore, it is important to find the commonalities within feminist theology in order to understand the basic framework for this research.

Common Themes

As stated before, feminist theology varies with different viewpoints and practices. To summarize this complex perspective on religion, faith and practice, is difficult, but there are common themes most feminist theologians can agree upon including; the patriarchal nature of traditional theology, the idea traditional theology ignores women, that traditional theology has had a negative effect on women, and women should be part of the theological process for change in interpretation and practice to happen.

First, almost all feminist theologians agree on the fact that traditional Christianity has been told, shared, and taught by mostly by men. The male perspective has been used to share the story of Christianity. Though women are a part of the story and in recent years have been more a part of the Christian voice, over all theology in study and practice has been dominated by men.

Second, traditional theology ignores women's experiences. According to Young (1990), "Women were not considered to have anything important to say" (p. 15). Feminist theologians understand theology has not taken into account the true essence or influence of women. The role of women in the formation and application of theology has been limited. In the eyes of feminist theologians, women have not been respected as individuals or as a group in the realm of traditional theology.

Third, feminist theologians agree that theology's patriarchal emphasis has had a detrimental effect on women. Feminist theologians not only see the influence traditional theology has had on faith and church, but the influence it has also had on the larger society (Young, 1990, p. 16). Feminist theologians agree that women, not just Christian women, have been oppressed by the thoughts, ideas, and practices of traditional theology.

Finally, feminist theologians agree women should be part of the theological process in order to motivate change. "Women must begin to be theologians; they must refuse to write only about or for men" (Young, 1990, pp. 15–16). Feminist theology not only focuses on the past oppression but also seeks change. Feminist theologians see women as part of that change. Feminist theologians see hope and power in women becoming those who read, interpret, write about, talk about, and teach God, the Bible,

history, church, and faith. “They must question the patriarchal mind-set that grants legitimacy to traditional theologizing” (Young, 1990, p. 17). Feminist theology sees the patriarchy that has influenced traditional theology and encourages women to think outside of that box of theology to include their own points of view.

Feminist theology is complex and vast in its thoughts and practices. However, most all feminist theologians can agree on some basic ideas of traditional theology; it has been shaped by a patriarchal mindset, women have been ignored, there have been negative consequences for women, and women are the key to change.

Facets of Feminist Theology That Influence My Framework

Because feminist theology is such a large discipline, it is important to acknowledge the major facets of feminist theology that influence my frame work. Admittedly not all pieces of feminist theology inform my framework and research; therefore, I intend to explain the three facets that most inform my understanding of feminist theology: the view of traditional theology as patriarchal, alternative interpretations of the Bible, and the goal of transformation.

Traditional patriarchal theology. Traditional Christian theology—including the study of God, scripture, and church history—is patriarchal. Tradition theology has been studied, written, and presented in a large majority by men (Young, 1990, p. 15). The male perspective has been used to share the story of Christianity. Though women are a part of the story and in recent years have been more a part of the Christian voice, overall theology as study and practice has been dominated by men. Patriarchal systems are found in traditional Christian theology from homes, to church leadership, to society. This

patriarchal society is one of the major critiques from a feminist perspective. According to Reuther (2002),

Feminism is a critical stance that challenges the patriarchal gender paradigm that associates males with human characteristics defined as superior and dominate (rationality, power) and females with those defined as inferior and auxiliary (intuition, passivity). (p. 3)

Patriarchy is an embraced system found in the society in which Christianity was birthed and has continued to be part of Christianity. Fiorenza (2001) describes patriarchy as

the power of the father over his children and the other members of the clan or household. In feminist theory, the meaning of patriarchy is generally no longer restricted to the power of the father over his kinship group, as is the case in social anthropology. Rather, the concept is developed as a means for identifying and challenging the social structures and ideologies that have enabled men to dominate and exploit wo/men throughout recorded history. (p. 115)

A patriarchal society begins in the home, but in the realm of Christianity the idea of men in power, especially over women and children, has become a part of church and society. Feminist theology has identified the patriarchy of traditional Christian theology, history, and practice as a way for women to be oppressed in the home, society, and church.

The patriarchy of Christian tradition can be traced to the beginning of Christianity. Christianity began as a religion within a patriarchal society. “Patriarchy ultimately defined the institution of Christianity due in no small measure to the cultural and **philosophical** influences of the society in which it emerged and took formal shape” (Riswold, 2009, p. 22). This patriarchy was continually encouraged by society, scripture, and practice. In the words of Young (1990), “Women who appeared in Scripture or

tradition were often simply ignored or their roles downplayed to fit patriarchal expectations of women” (p. 15). Feminist theologians understand Scriptures were written within the larger patriarchal society but also understand because of that the patriarchal society has continued to be encouraged and passed on through the generations. Because women were ignored and downplayed in scripture, many women have continued to feel ignored and disrespected within their own religious experiences. Women have not only been ignored in scripture and society, but also in the practice of church. As Watson (2003) writes,

Similar to Scripture, the church as the key institution within Christianity has provided women with a situation of fundamental ambiguity: while women have on the basis of gender often been excluded from the power centers of the church, such as preaching or sacramental celebration, the majority of those who attend church services have traditionally been women. (p. 44)

Just because the stories of women are not prevalent does not mean women have not been a part of religious history. On the contrary, women have been very involved in the practice of religious institutions. Women have often fallen in a strange place. While they have been, and continue to be, involved in traditional Christianity in thought and practice, they have not been represented as so. This silence has pointed toward the traditional Christian idea of women as inferior. Elizabeth Cady Stanton believed, “Institutional Christianity, she argued, had created and supported the supposed inferiority of women, which was not in line with Jesus’ message of equality” (Watson, 2003, p. 7). Stanton’s goal was to point to the patriarchal history and tradition as the creator of the idea of women as inferior, not Jesus himself. However, for feminist theologians, the existence of

the supposed inferiority itself has had a negative effect on the view of women within traditional Christianity. Traditional patriarchal theology has allowed for a view of women as subordinate throughout Christian history.

Feminist theology is honest about the reality of patriarchy within traditional Christian theology but ultimately seeks to change the view that women are inferior to men. Feminist theology seeks to look beyond the traditions of theology in order to change the traditional view, role, and place of women within Christianity. According to Watson (2003), feminist theology strives to rise above traditional boundaries of a patriarchal mindset, “for example, the boundaries of an existing canon, the boundaries of church institutions and denominations, and the boundaries of Christianity itself” (p. 23). Feminist theology looks deeper into theology, history, and faith to overcome the boundaries and oppressive nature of the traditional patriarchy. There are different ways feminist theologians go about this “critical and constructive dialogue” (Watson, 2003, p. 23). Two of those groups are those who aim to either find or create a theological base for women’s equality, and those who propose to celebrate women’s difference and women’s identities as women (Watson, 2003, p. 28). In looking into the history of Christian theology, some feminists seek to find women and circumstances to support the idea that women are to be seen as equal to men and others who focus on the differences of women and how these differences can be seen as possibilities and opportunities. While these approaches are different, they both seek the ultimate goal of women being viewed differently from tradition. All feminist interpretations seek change and justice.

The agenda of feminist theology is one of justice and full humanity of women. Feminist theology critically addresses patriarchal biases within theology and promotes awareness of the role played by Christian theology in condoning and advocating patriarchy. This awareness can then lead to developing a new way of doing theology that no longer accepts particular gender constructions as given, but works towards their transformation into theological concepts that enable and advocate a more inclusive and diverse theology and church. (Watson, 2003, p. 28)

The feminist focus on patriarchy is an honest and critical approach to theology that explores the past and hopes for the future. It is hard to argue with the existence of patriarchy with traditional Christian theology. Patriarchy is a part of Christianity, its history and present. Feminist theology seeks to explore this patriarchal tradition and its influence on women in faith and practice, for the purpose of changing the traditional view of women.

As a part of my feminist theology in relation to this research, I admit that traditional theology is patriarchal. The influence of a patriarchal theology has left an impact on believers and churches, especially in the Baptist tradition. However, we can see that feminist theology has influenced the patriarchal nature of theology and practice simply in the reality that professional women ministers exist to be interviewed and researched, even in the Baptist tradition that has been slow to embrace facets of feminist theology. My framework is influenced by feminist theology's understanding that Christian theology for the most part is patriarchal. This understanding identifies the context in which the women involved in this research have lived and ministered.

Interpretation of the Bible. The Bible is the most authoritative written document in traditional Christian theology. Traditionally the Bible has been used to understand the history of the religion and for instructions on how to live. A feminist

reading of the Bible challenges the reader to not only read what is included, but to focus on what is not included and context the text was written. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2001) writes that becoming a feminist interpreter of the Bible, “means shifting your focus from biblical interpretation as a tool for becoming conscious of structures of domination and for articulating visions of radical democracy that are inscribed in our own experience as well as in that of texts” (p. 3). Feminist theology seeks to read and interpret the Bible from a different perspective. A feminist reading of scripture focuses on women’s experiences. According to Watson (2003),

Feminist theology is concerned with reading and interpreting Scripture and the Christian tradition in the light of women’s experiences. The aim of such a re-reading is to un-cover women’s absences as well as to discover women’s presences throughout the history of the Christian church and in those texts the Christian church considers relevant and normative. (p. 5)

This focus is based on the idea that traditional biblical reading and interpretation have been done from a patriarchal norm. Feminist theology seeks to read beyond the traditional readings, interpretations, and understandings to include women in the stories—past, present, and future.

There are different forms of feminist biblical reading and interpretation. One of the popular methods of a feminist reading of scripture is liberation interpretation. With a liberation interpretation the focus is on liberating scripture from the traditional patriarchal interpretation. According to Letty Russell (1985),

In all work on feminist and liberation interpretation, a key question is, What would it mean for the Bible to be a liberated word? Liberation from a patriarchal

worldview is never a finished task, for the stories continue to be shaped by that view. How then can we hope for a liberated word? (p. 17)

This method seeks to read the Bible from a liberated view—liberated from the influences of patriarchy and oppression. However, the question arises as to whether this way of reading scripture will ever be possible. Will we ever be able to read and interpret scripture apart from the influence of patriarchy? The Christian identity of women has been shaped by a traditional reading of scripture. The liberation method seeks to liberate women from this type of reading in order to form and reconstruct new identities. Also, a proponent of a liberation perspective, Elizabeth S. Fiorenza (2001) writes,

Religious biblical identity that is shaped by Scripture must in evernew readings be deconstructed and reconstructed in terms of global praxis for the liberation of all wo/men. Cultural identity that is shaped by biblical discourses must also be critically interrogated and transformed. (p. 166)

A feminist liberation reading of scripture sets women free of traditional readings that may seem oppressive, allowing women to reshape their identities individually and as a whole within Christian tradition. This method of scripture reading and interpretation is transformative for Christian traditions and women. This transformation starts with women reading and interpreting for themselves. Liberation interpretation is just one example of a method to gain insight into the alternative Biblical interpretation models offered in feminist theology.

A major component of feminist theology in relation to Biblical interpretation, is giving women the opportunity to read and interpret scripture for themselves. Most biblical interpretation has been done by men. Men have read scripture, interpreted it,

written about it, presented it, taught it, and preached it. For centuries women were excluded from Biblical interpretation. Feminist theology seeks to put Biblical reading and interpretation into the minds, heads, and hearts of women. Feminist theology is not just about reading and interpreting, but about who is doing the reading and interpretation. As Watson (2003) writes,

The focus in a feminist reading of Scripture is therefore not merely on the content of Scripture as authoritative and normative for the Christian community; it is focused primarily on the interactive process of reading, a process that creates meaning for those who participate in the Christian community as the people they are. (pp. 10–11)

Biblical reading and interpretation is a personal and passionate undertaking. Feminist theology seeks to involve women in personal and communal aspects of Biblical dialogue. Within feminist theology women are to be given respect as theologians. Their interpretations matter. “A feminist interpretation of Scripture assumes that the authority of the biblical text cannot be separated from the authority of women as its critical readers” (Watson, 2003, p. 11). If women are a part of God’s story, then they should be a part of the reading, interpreting and sharing of God’s story. This ideal is an integral part of my personal understanding of feminist theology.

Feminist theology looks at scripture through the eyes and lives of women. This realm of theology focuses on reading the Bible with the understanding of the patriarchal society in which it was written. While some sects of feminist theology may see the authority of scripture as a lost cause, many feminist theologians focus on where religious texts can be seen as liberating for women. Lastly, and maybe most importantly, feminist

theology seeks to put scripture in the hands of women. Feminist theology encourages women to read, interpret, write, teach, and theologize for themselves from their perspectives. A feminist theology reading of scriptures encourages change and transformation. This idea of change is a vital piece of feminist theology and informative to my framework. As a woman minister, I read and interpret scripture from my own experiences as a woman and within the context the text was written. As a woman minister, I read, interpret, write, teach and theologize on my own and on the behalf of those I lead and teach. I, as well as the women ministers within this research, embody some sense of feminist Biblical interpretation to justify our interpretation of God's call and want to serve in professional ministry, as women serving in leadership is often frowned upon within traditional Biblical interpretation.

Goal of transformation. My framework is informed by the facet of feminist theology that seeks for change within traditional theology to be more mindful and inclusive of women. Feminist theology thrives on the hope for change. According to Watson (2003), "Feminist theology is geared towards transformation and change both in individual lives and in the life of society" (p. 52). Feminist theology seeks to change traditional theology for the betterment of women's lives, communities of faith, and society and realizes that change and diversity are a part of its simplest foundations.

One does not become involved in feminist theology thinking their thoughts, ideas, beliefs and world view will not be changed and even turned upside-down. Feminist theology, like feminist theory and the feminist movement, hopes for progress, for movement and for growth. "Engaging in a feminist biblical spirituality, therefore, means

learning how to read/understand the Bible from the standpoint of a feminist theology of justice and a feminist movement for change” (Fiorenza, 2001, p. 1). Traditional Christian theology in most instances holds to the traditions and beliefs of the past, while feminist theology seeks to transform the traditions and beliefs of the past to better the present and future for women, churches, and society. Feminist theology asks Christians to step outside their traditional box of beliefs, something that is often scary and sometimes even dangerous. Feminist theology seeks to examine the tradition and find places where women have been ignored and oppressed and bring those instances to light for the hope of more and better involvement for women in Christian tradition. Feminist theology seeks to change the traditional Christian identity. Feminist theology is willing to dissect and explore the traditional understandings for the sake of change in relation to the betterment of women. This hope for change is sometimes unsettling to those who understand their lives and faith through the traditional Christian theology and on the other side, liberating for those who have felt oppressed by traditional theology.

My framework of feminist theology is greatly influenced by the hope for transformation within traditional Christian thought and practice. “Feminism is a transforming theology” (Clague, 1997, p. 7). Feminist theology has transformed religious thought and practice. Without feminist theology, I might not even be involved in a research project about the call experiences of women in ministry, because years ago, women did not have the opportunity to serve in ministry or have the authority to research anything worthwhile in the realm of academia or theology. However, feminist theology allows for new ways of thinking and doing. As Julie Clague (1997) writes in her forward

for Linda Hogan's *From Women's Experience to Feminist Theology*, "Women's experience and women's praxis are the bases upon which feminist theology endeavors to reconstruct and create new religious forms" (p. 7). The hope of feminist theology is manifested as it continues to grow, form and take shape, based on women's experiences. This hope for transformation is not based on a tradition of standard beliefs and practices, but focuses on the diversity of women's experiences and the freedom to embrace those experiences. According to Clague (1997),

Feminist theology does not pretend—as religion often does—to be fixed, unchanging, true. It embraces the dynamic and diverse elements found within it. Feminist theology is not a theory of everything. It does not promise to give answers, nor is it so insecure as to require the last word or final say. (p. 7)

While traditional Christian theology set its hope on traditional structures and concrete beliefs and systems, feminist theology allows room for growth and transformation. Feminist theology provides hope for oppressed women within religious contexts and it will continue to do so as it evolves, based on women's experiences. Clague (1997) writes, "Feminist theologians are formulating new and unconventional alternative visions of a holy city in which many will feel more at home" (p. 7). There is hope in knowing feminist theology is always working for transformation, better understanding, and better inclusion of women within religious understanding and practice.

Within feminist theology, the facet of transformation is a significant part of my personal theoretical framework. Feminist theology hopes for change within the created and cultured religious traditions that oppress women. This facet of feminist theology is one of the reasons for my research. In exploring the call experiences of Baptist women

ministers I hope to transform the way we as individuals and churches view and nurture believers, specifically women called to professional ministry.

Conclusion

Feminist theology is a part of my feminist framework. Its foundations, focus on rereading, rethinking, and rewriting traditional theology, the scholarship of some of the women who worked for its inclusion into theological education, philosophy, and practice, and the commonalities that exist with such a diverse discipline, are important to my understanding of feminist theology. Three facets of feminist theology that influence my personal framework are the understanding that traditional theology is patriarchal, alternative Biblical interpretation, and the hope for transformation. Feminist theology is one piece of my theoretical framework for this research project.

Common Themes of Framework: Freedom, Responsibility, and Hope

Though complicated, my Christian, Baptist, Feminist theoretical framework is one centered around principles of freedom, responsibility and hope. Each aspect of my theoretical framework embodies freedom. As a Christian, I am free to choose to believe in Jesus Christ. As a Baptist, I am free to interpret the Bible, relate to God, minister in the church and the world, and to exercise my religion freely. As a woman and feminist theologian, I am free to interpret scripture and Christian tradition critically from the perspective of my own experiences as a woman.

All aspects of my theoretical framework embody an element of personal responsibility. As a Christian, I am responsible for the understanding and growing of my personal faith and ministry. As a Baptist, I am responsible for learning about the history

of the tradition in which I live out my faith, and upholding the basic principles within my own life and the church I serve as a minister. As a woman and feminist theologian, I am responsible for studying scripture and tradition with women in mind and not falling into the accepted patriarchal traditional interpretation.

Each aspect of my theoretical framework also embodies some form of hope. As a Christian, I have hope in eternal life in heaven through my belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. As a Baptist, I have hope in the freedoms of Baptist history and more Baptists taking responsibility for their own freedoms and allowing others to do the same as we seek to overcome the negativity bred by denominational chaos and disregard for these freedoms. As a woman and feminist, I have hope that critical and creative ways of evaluating scripture and Christian tradition, polity, and practice will continue to make women an integral part of theology and faith. My hope is that that systems and traditions of Christianity, specifically Baptist, can be transformed through feminist theology while remaining true to the central beliefs of Christianity and foundational freedoms of Baptist theology.

Conclusion

I am a Christian. I was raised in the Christian tradition, but more importantly have made a personal choice to believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and to follow Christ in the living out of my life. I am a Baptist. I was not reared Baptist, but chose the Baptist tradition as the place to exercise my faith and calling based on my respect for the Baptist freedoms—Bible Freedom, Soul Freedom, Church Freedom and Religious Freedom. I am a woman. My identity as a woman challenges my view of

Christian tradition, through the lens of feminist theology. At first glance, these perspectives seem at odds; however, these perspectives are a part of who I am as a person, researcher, and academic. At times this eclectic framework is difficult to navigate, but this eclectic mix is what makes me and my research authentic. This is my theoretical framework: Christian, Baptist, Feminist. It is this framework that encourages my research on the call experiences of Baptist women ministers and influenced the sharing and analyzing of their stories.

CHAPTER IV

STORIES AND THEMES

While previous chapters have presented the historical and Biblical understandings of call and the history of women within the Baptist context, the call experiences of Baptist women ministers are best understood from the perspective of Baptist women ministers themselves. This research project focuses on the stories of five Baptist women ministers, with a specific emphasis on their call experiences. In the first part of this chapter, I introduce to the research participants. The second part of the chapter presents details of common themes that arose through analysis of their stories.

Sharing Their Stories

The first section of this chapter includes an introduction to each of the research participants. The methodology appendix details how the participants were chosen. All participants are Baptist women who have experience with the Southern Baptist tradition and served in ministry. Here are small glimpses of the stories of Callie Jean, Dawn, Evelyn, June, and Kim.

Callie Jean

Callie Jean serves as an Associate Pastor of Education and Families. She has served in professional ministry for 30 years, for the past 23 years in the same church setting. She is seminary educated and ordained. Callie Jean's story is influenced by family, church, and her love of learning and teaching.

Callie Jean was from Southern Baptist heritage. Her father was a Southern Baptist pastor and involved in Southern Baptist leadership and her mom was active in church life. Her paternal grandfather was also an itinerant preacher. Callie Jean learned of the Christian faith and Baptist tradition from her family.

Church was central to her family life. Church provided a career for her dad and finances for her family life. Church was also the center of her mother's social life. She shared, "My dad was in seminary at the time I was born . . . I was born on the first day of Vacation Bible School" (personal communication, September 14, 2015). As a young child, she and her two siblings even "played" church. Her family moved around to a few different churches in her lifetime; however, no matter where they were, church was a central part of life. From an early age, Callie Jean was involved in the life and work of the church, and that involvement continued throughout her life.

Callie Jean's church influence was not just about learning and growing in the faith, but also about serving. As a teenager, Callie Jean began to serve within the church, volunteering with Vacation Bible School and helping with the weekday school. She also worked at a local camp in the summer. While she worked at the camp, she had the opportunity to participate in some of the training sessions and worship services. These experiences grew her love for service and missions. In college, she was involved in the Baptist Student Union, a college campus ministry, and served as a summer missionary one summer out of state.

Callie Jean's call and professional ministry stemmed from the foundation of her family and church involvement, along with her love of learning and education. Callie

Jean attended the college where her mother and father met. She studied education and as she finished her degree, began to look for career opportunities. She taught school for a little while, but continued to consider missions as a career. She eventually enrolled in summer classes at seminary with the goal of applying to be a foreign missionary, where she could use her school teaching degree and experience. While her initial plans were to attend seminary and get enough credits to apply as a foreign missionary, her plans began to change. Eventually she decided to take a leave of absence from her teaching job, to pursue a degree at seminary. “My first significant call, other than my conversion experience, was to go to seminary” (personal communication, September 14, 2015). During her time at seminary, she enjoyed studying and learning, even though she was there at the height of the Southern Baptist denominational controversy and the conservative take-over, situated around ideas of women in ministry, inerrancy, and power. Complicating matters even more, her father was still involved in denominational leadership. Callie Jean, as a daughter of a preacher involved in Baptist politics and as a seminary student during the controversy, had first-hand knowledge and understanding of the controversy. Callie Jean completed seminary, just before many of the seminaries went through drastic changes. Her education in seminary opened the door for her to think differently about her calling and career.

After seminary, Callie Jean was open to looking for ministry positions. While she had served in the church and received a seminary degree, there was still some doubt as she accepted her first ministry job, but she excelled. She had a mentor who encouraged continued learning at training conferences. Callie Jean made her way and built her

confidence in her first position. The transition to a new position was a difficult one. Callie Jean had opportunities to move to other churches before, but stayed. Part of her reluctance to move was the relationships she had created, one of which included a man she dated for many years. Callie Jean shared of the difficulties in discerning God's call to stay, to leave, and to serve. She eventually left and began serving at the church she currently serves. She began her ministry there as the Minister of Childhood Education and her role has changed now to the Associate Pastor of Education and Families. She was ordained at her current church. Even though Callie Jean experienced many moves as a child of a pastor, she has ministered in the same church for over 20 years.

Callie Jean's most recent life change occurred when she got married. She said, "Well, getting married is an interesting journey. Having a partner for the first time at 50" (personal communication, October 27, 2015). She shared the joy in having a partner in ministry, as her husband was active in the ministry of the church.

Callie Jean's life story was centered around family and church. Her call was also influenced by her love for learning and education. Her call journey was not full of ah-ha moments, but learning and serving experiences. She shared, "A lot of times, as I think in my life, I came to the call based on experiences. This felt good to do this" (personal communication, November 29, 2016). In doing ministry, she experienced God's call and the affirmation of that call through education, people, and personal study.

Dawn

Dawn serves as a Minister to Children. She has served in professional ministry for 10 years and has served in her current position for 4 years. She is seminary educated

and ordained. Dawn's story is influenced by her Aunt Joan and other minister mentors along with consistent church involvement and service.

Dawn grew up in a home where church was valued. Her father was raised Catholic and not involved in church, but her mother, her brother, and she were active in church. She made a profession of faith at a young age and spent most her younger life in the same church setting. Dawn knew at a young age women could serve as ministers, because her Aunt Joan became a minister in the early 1980s. Dawn shared, "So, my entire life I have had an ordained woman in my life—hers was the first ordination I attended—I don't remember it" (personal communication, September 15, 2015). There was never a time in Dawn's life that she doubted women could be ministers; she just never thought she would be one.

Throughout her life, Dawn remained active in church life. She described her home church as "pretty dysfunctional" (personal communication, September 15, 2015). Her home church was near a seminary, so new youth ministers rotated in and out every few years. However, one experience with a youth minister allowed her to experience the church being the church. A woman youth minister was hired, but resigned. Later, the church found out she was asked to resign because she and her husband were separated, and she got pregnant with another man's child. Later, the youth minister went forward on a Sunday morning. Dawn shared this story,

So, at the end she comes forward and he (the interim pastor) does all the talking and she just stands there and we are all sitting there and he says, "if you accept Sarah's apology and all that please stand"—entire place stood up. No hesitation whatsoever, the entire place stood up. And then he said, "if you would like to offer her kind words of love and support please come forward." And people were

like instantly running forward. Um, so for me that moment, um was the church at its best. Um, in the midst of so much dysfunction and horrible things, that was the church stopping for a moment and being the church. (personal communication, September 15, 2015)

This example of the church's compassion had an impact on Dawn. After this incident, a new youth minister, Mel, was hired. Dawn volunteered with Mel in the church, and Mel affirmed Dawn's gifts for ministry. Her church involvement continued in college. She visited a few different churches and plugged into the Baptist Student Union on campus. When she became involved in a church close to campus, she met the pastor, John, who also encouraged her in her gifts for ministry.

The summer after her junior year in college, Dawn served on staff for a Christian summer camp. After encouragement from others and affirmation through her work at camp, Dawn began to look at seminaries to attend after college. While in seminary, she got a job as a children's ministry intern at a near-by church, serving on staff with her old youth minister, Mel. Dawn shared, "And I loved working and going to school at the same time, because I could apply things in both directions" (personal communication, September 15, 2015). During seminary, Dawn met her husband, James, who also attended seminary and worked at another church. They got married over a winter break and began navigating seminary and ministry together. James eventually left his ministry position due to conflict within the church, and Dawn and James began to figure out what ministry and marriage would look like together. After their ordinations and completion of seminary, Dawn and James continued to search for professional ministry opportunities,

even interviewing for a position together, but realized that was not for them. James began to explore other avenues.

As Dawn continued to search for a position, she continued to serve as an intern, and work other jobs, including as a barista at Starbucks. She said, “People open up to their barista a lot more than they open up to their minister” (personal communication, September 15, 2105). During this time of professional unrest, Dawn became involved in a leadership program for women ministers, which was of great encouragement. The search process was grueling, including travel, time, rejection and confusion. Dawn shared of one instance, where the committee voted to hire her on Sunday, but by Wednesday, she received word the church was going in a different direction.

During this time of unrest in her internship, Dawn received encouragement from her Aunt Joan. Joan had a friend who was the pastor of a church looking for a children’s minister. This pastor, Brad, was on the search committee that hired Joan at the church that eventually ordained her. Brad called Dawn and told her the church was interested in talking with her about the position. Dawn said,

... at this point I am scarred. I am bruised. I am like, “sure . . . whatever, what can it hurt. I don’t even know what this town is. I have never even heard of this place.” And it was crazy trying to figure out when to come down and interview between my three jobs. (personal communication, September 15, 2015)

Dawn went and interviewed, then got offered the position. Dawn and James moved away from near her hometown, to a new state. Not long after they moved, James was offered and took a youth ministry position at a near-by Presbyterian Church. James again experienced frustration as his position was cut and he was asked to leave. After his

departure, people in the church tried to get his position back. Eventually James decided to think about something different, “He started thinking maybe nursing. He loved being in the hospital for CPE and all that” (personal communication, September 15, 2015). James left the Presbyterian church, started nursing school and Dawn and James began attending church together. Dawn shared, “. . . he is kind of enjoying being a minister’s wife—kind of fitting in that role. Kind of jumping in and helping there” (personal communication, September 15, 2015). James’s continued encouragement and support gave affirmation to Dawn’s call.

Even though Dawn experienced some “church-hurt” and frustration throughout her story, she continued to serve and seek God’s call. (I use my own phrase “church hurt” to mean any pain experienced in relation to being involved in a community of faith or at the hands of the church community.) In reflection on her calling she shared,

Really all I can say is, that is how I know it is calling. Because it does not make logical sense whatsoever. I got a million reasons not be, but I have seen enough of those, like, kingdom events—like those were—that is who we are supposed to be. That is, I can’t imagine not. (personal communication, September 15, 2015)

She shared, “I don’t have this big dramatic story; it just kind of happened” (personal communication, November 21, 2016). Dawn’s understanding of her call came through serving within the church and being encouraged by those in the church, especially ministers. Dawn’s story was one of difficulties and frustration, but continued affirmation.

Evelyn

Evelyn is a recently retired Pastor. She served in professional ministry for about 25 years. Throughout her ministry, she served in a variety of ministry positions. She is seminary educated and ordained. Evelyn's story is one of early church service, a second career and education, all in the imagination of the Holy Spirit.

Evelyn was born after the end of World War II. Her mother went to college and became a media specialist when Evelyn was about fourth grade. Evelyn remembered her mom as always surrounded by children. When Evelyn was young, her father was an alcoholic. However, around her second-grade year, she remembered her father stopped drinking. They moved to a new home, and he opened his own store. He was a butcher and Evelyn had memories of helping him with the books and around the store. Evelyn shared, "somehow he got enamored by the church training program and the church sent him for training" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). The church training program was a program offered at most churches on Sunday night with a focus on training for evangelism and mission involvement. Evelyn remembered as a child being members of a standard First Baptist church. She shared, "And it was in that church when I was nine that I made profession of faith and my best friend was the pastor's daughter and I was in their house a whole lot, and he was a really moderate preacher" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Evelyn was impacted by the model of her pastor at a young age, and began serving in the church at a young age. She first served the church with her musical abilities. She played piano for her home church when the pastor's wife could not play. Then, as a teenager, she began playing the organ for a

mission church. Even as a teenager, she took preparation and excellence in church service seriously. She continued to play for the mission church and was even asked to teach the Youth Sunday School Class. When her dad became the director for the training union for the association, she helped him teach and lead training sessions at different churches. From a young age, Evelyn learned to prepare and lead because she was involved in serving within the church setting.

Evelyn's first personal experience with call came as a teenager at a Baptist camp. She shared her experience,

But at the end (of camp) we had this very passionate call—if you would give yourself to full-time Christian service, so I sat there as I watched a whole bunch of the kids went down and I don't know about that. Then I got to thinking about teaching in these churches and you know I could probably do Christian education—maybe God is calling me to do that. I marched up there with all the rest of them and filled out the papers. (personal communication, September 10, 2015)

Evelyn had served in church and began to question God's call into church service.

However, this questioning was subdued by life and didn't come up again until later in adulthood.

Evelyn graduated from high school and went on to college. She graduated from college with an elementary education degree. She taught for a few years, but she did not excel in the teaching profession. As a young adult, Evelyn married her husband, Alvin. He served 22 years in the military and they lived in 27 different places. They had two daughters and adopted a son through international adoption. While Alvin served in the military, Evelyn was content with being a military wife and mother. After living in a

foreign country, Evelyn and her husband returned to the United States. At the time, they had two daughters in private universities, so Evelyn decided she needed to work. She began by applying to the school system, but never heard from them. She worked as a secretary and played the organ as a substitute for some churches. While she was playing the organ at College Presbyterian Church, she was asked to work with Christian education and the youth at the church. She served at the Presbyterian church for about a year. After serving at the Presbyterian Church for a year, Evelyn was approached by the pastor of Wellspring Baptist Church to apply for the minister of education position at the church. Evelyn was hesitant because of her lack of education, especially in the context of Wellspring, which was a highly-educated church body. However, Evelyn applied, was hired, and ministered at Wellspring for 7 years. During her time at Wellspring, she took continued learning opportunities and ministry trainings offered by a local seminary. During her years at Wellspring, she also attended her first Baptist Women in Ministry meeting. The first-time Evelyn had ever heard a woman preach was at that meeting. During her ministry at Wellspring, Evelyn decided to attend seminary to get more education.

Evelyn thrived and grew in her seminary education experience. She often questioned her decision, as she was older, but did her best to study and learn. She even prayed, “Dear God in Heaven, How am I gonna do this?” (personal communication, September 10, 2015). She learned from some of the prominent thinkers in theology and ministry and graduated *Magnum Cum Laude*. After her graduation, she was ordained by Wellspring Baptist Church before going to work as the Associate Pastor at Norwood

Baptist Church, in another state. However, while she served at Norwood, Evelyn's husband struggled to find a full-time job. He taught as an adjunct professor with three different universities. During her time at Norwood, she received a letter from First Baptist Church in Village. They needed someone willing to preach once a month and lead the older adult ministry. She applied and got the job. This job was also good for Alvin, because he knew of an engineering firm close by where he could work.

During her time at First Baptist, Evelyn preached and used her leadership skills as the church transitioned from one pastor to another. Evelyn was exhausted after helping the church transition to a new pastor. She shared, "I thought when this new minister comes and gets settled in, I am going to retire. I am going to retire because I am in my 60s" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). However, Evelyn did not know of the opportunity that would soon come. There was a plan to start a church and Evelyn was asked to be a representative from First Baptist Village. As she and others brainstormed and planned for the new church, the issue of the pastor came to question. Some of the people involved in the planning stages wanted to search for a woman pastor. As Evelyn listed possible women ministers for the position, a minister turned to Evelyn and asked, "'well what about you Evelyn?' And Evelyn said, 'And I just—it just blew me away—just like the Holy Spirit just came'" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Evelyn thought and prayed about the opportunity and the more she pondered, the more it seemed like a good fit, so she took the position and became the pastor of a church start, Victory Baptist Church. Evelyn pastored Victory Baptist Church and grew the congregation and the ministries of the church.

Recently, Evelyn retired. She continued to attend Victory Baptist Church. She continued to work with other churches and pastors, as she works with a moderate Baptist organization that partners with churches, pastors, and ministry organizations. Evelyn described her call story using the words “only in the imagination of the Holy Spirit” (personal communication, September 10, 2015). This call may not have made sense, but it was Holy Spirit led. In reflecting on the process of sharing her story she said, “I think um, I think just being amazed at the providence of God and how God works” (personal communication, November 28, 2016). Evelyn prepared and participated in ministry as she played the organ and taught Sunday school as a teenager. She was open to the Holy Spirit later in life and began a career in professional ministry. She prepared for her ministry career with experience and education, always striving to do her best. She was affirmed by her husband and encouraged by the churches that hired her. Throughout her story, Evelyn affirmed the work of God in preparing her and calling her to ministry.

June

June is a Minister with Children and Families. She has served in professional ministry for eleven years, four years in her current position. She is seminary educated and ordained. June’s story is one of family life, a second career, hardship, and determination.

June was born into an eclectic family. Her mother and father are from two different ethnic traditions. Her father’s family immigrated to the United States. He was the first generation born in America. Her mother and father separated when June was young, but they continued to co-parent. They did not officially divorce until 15 years

after their separation because the laws of the state they lived in did not allow the woman to file for divorce. Her paternal grandmother was influential in her faith. June shared, “She had her Bible always and she would read it and, um, she was Baptist and became Baptist in the United States” (personal communication, September 22, 2015). In her father’s family, the Christian faith was important, but not important in her mother’s family. As a young child, June was raised in the Church of God. June made a profession of faith while attending the Church of God, but soon after, her mother began taking her brother and her to a Southern Baptist church, where June was baptized. She was involved in the GAs and Acteens. GAs and Acteens were Southern Baptist mission programs. June even went through the program and was given the title Queen with a Scepter. The honor of Queen with the Scepter was given to a girl who had completed all the steps of the mission program. She was also involved in the youth choir, with which she went on her first mission trip as a teenager. June was influenced by the faith of her father’s family and involved in church as a young child.

As a young adult, June attended a local junior college and then transferred to a four-year college in a neighboring state. During college, June met Terry, and they got married soon after graduation. June was ready to move forward with life and have some freedom from her mother, with whom she admitted, she had a difficult relationship with as a young adult. Terry was in the military. They were stationed in the United States for a year and then they were stationed abroad. During their time abroad and when they returned to the United States, June did accounting work. While they were out of the

states, Terry and June were not active in church life. For a year, June played the piano for a small church, but for most of their time overseas June said,

I know God was present, but He was not on my radar. It was not a priority to me, um, Terry and I were just children sight-seeing, doing all kinds of things and we were not going to church other than that one year at that chapel and when we left that base and did other things, we didn't. So, it was kind of a dry—I look at that as a dry period. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

After being overseas for about 7 years, Terry was stationed back in the United States. As they were going through orientation at their new base, they met the chaplain and his wife and became friends, and then they got involved in church. While they were there, June got pregnant. June shared the story of her difficult delivery. Her daughter, Tracy was born and sent to the children's hospital, while June remained in the hospital on a breathing machine for two days, unaware of what was happening. When June awakened, she realized what an ordeal they had gone through. Three days after Tracy was born, June finally got to see her and the doctors told June, that Tracy was brain dead. June shared this story;

Three days after Tracy was born and I was awake, they brought her to me and they let us know that she was brain dead . . . yeah . . . So, um, the chaplain came and he was with us and, um, it was interesting because I asked him even before she was born about baptism and all of these things, so for him to actually do it in the hospital was a big step for him because being a real Southern Baptist, it was not really necessary. And I knew it was not necessary, but it was important to us. (personal communication, September 22, 2105)

June and Terry were advised to remove the life support and they did; after that Tracy lived for a couple of days. As June said, "This experience was life changing for me"

(personal communication, September 22, 2015). After this experience, June and Terry grieved and went through counseling. Through this difficult time, June began to see God differently. She shared,

He was not the same God that I grew up with. I grew up with a God that you had to do everything right and you were scared or you might get in trouble and I couldn't ask questions in the Southern Baptist Church and if I did they were out of the norm, they, so it was a fearful God that I grew up with . . . I began to see God as this comforter, this compassionate God, this loving God that was with me throughout this experience because I can tell you that I was upset and angry and all of this, but I can tell you that I knew it was going to be all right because God was with me—and that is so weird! I don't know if I could identify that in that moment, but in a month or two I could look back and I had this kind of peace. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

June and Terry struggled through the grief together. After this experience, June got pregnant again and suffered a miscarriage. Following the miscarriage, June and Terry had two children within 3 years. June admitted her experience with Tracy changed the way she viewed God and the way she raised her children. June's family moved around when their children were young. They lived in 14 locations in 21 years. As they moved, they attended church on base and became involved in a local church. June shared the story of when they attended a Baptist church. The Baptist church would not dedicate her son Jeremy because her husband Terry had not had been baptized by immersion, so they began to attend a Methodist Church. She led a mother-child program, led children's choir, and sang in the adult choir. However, when they moved to another state, June became more involved in an intense Lay Minister's Ministry, which required months of training. When Terry retired, the family moved to again and became involved in Cross Baptist Church. June was asked to teach a children's Sunday School class for the first

time. While June was volunteering in the children's ministry at Cross Baptist, the children's minister resigned and June shared, "I started getting a little nudging from God" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). In June's mind, she was an accountant. June continued to volunteer and went on a retreat with the children and continued to feel God's nudging. After a few months, she was hired as the interim children's minister. She shared, "I could not believe that I was being paid to do something that I absolutely loved" (personal communication, September 22, 2015).

June loved her new position and thrived at doing it, but she felt unqualified, so she decided to go to divinity school. She served at Cross Baptist as the interim children's minister for over two years, but was not hired as the full-time minister. June said, "I felt I had been called to do this and I could not understand being denied this" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). Even though she was heartbroken, her husband, a divinity school professor, and people in the church continued to encourage her. June continued in her studies at divinity school, completed two units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), and did a 12-month chaplaincy residency. While Cross Baptist caused some hurt and doubt for June, later they ordained her as a Deacon in the church, and years later, ordained her as a minister.

June continued to pursue professional ministry and began applying to churches. She got a job at Bell Baptist Church as the full-time Minister of Education and Children, where she served for a few years. However, she was never comfortable there. She said, "It reminded me of growing up in that Baptist church in that you couldn't ask the questions . . ." (personal communication, September 22, 2015). She wanted children to

see God as loving and compassionate and kind. While June was serving at Bell Baptist, she was contacted by Blue Baptist Church. She had not even sent her resume; however, after talking with the church, it felt right. Her position at Blue Baptist was a good fit for her theology and gifts. Though her pursuit of a professional ministry career was difficult, it was good. June shared, “I think ministry—just being able to do this—feels meaningful. It just gives me purpose” (personal communication, September 22, 2015).

June’s story was influenced by her family, the trauma of losing a child, a growing love for church work despite being out of church life for years, the hardship of being denied a ministry, determination to prepare for ministry, and finding a perfect place to minister. June faced struggles in life and ministry, but continued to feel the presence of God and continued to find ways to minister.

Kim

Kim has served as a chaplain, minister, and itinerant preacher. During most of this study, she served as an interim pastor. At the end of the study she and her husband made a move to serve as ministers on the same church staff. She is seminary educated and ordained. Her story is founded on family, service and learning.

Kim was born in a small town outside of a large city. Her mom and dad both grew up in farming communities. One of her favorite memories from her childhood was visiting the local library, “And this is just one of my favorite memories is just walking in there and smelling the books, you know, and it smelled like old house and books—it is just too—I am sure heaven is going to smell like that” (personal communication,

September 11, 2015). Place was important to Kim as she shared memories of visiting her mother's home-place and visiting relatives growing up, even going to church with them.

The church Kim attended as a child had a great impact on her faith. She was impacted positively by a few Sunday school teachers, and negatively by some of the pastors. Growing up she had a fearful view of God, due to some of those early influences. She shared of Brother Mark, the children's pastor, who, "One time told us if we did not ask forgiveness for every sin that we committed then we were not forgiven" (personal communication, September 11, 2015). She learned very little about God's grace in this atmosphere. However, she made a profession of faith around age 7 and was baptized. She was baptized by Mike Carroll, whom she referred to as the "screamy preacher" (personal communication, September 11, 2015). Between Brother Mark and the "screamy preacher," Kim had difficult time feeling comfortable in church. When Kim was in high school, the church split. She and her family visited a few others churches, and then returned, but Kim never felt at home there.

Education was important to Kim and her family. Her parents put money aside for their children to go to college, but it was up to them to get scholarships or pay the rest. Even though Kim dreamed of going to a large, prestigious, private university, she ended up at The University. Freshman year was a struggle, as Kim tried to find her place. As Kim got involved in the Baptist Student Union (BSU) and Avenue Church, she began to find a home. She also got to see a woman minister for the first time, "one campus minister was a woman and she was the first woman in ministry that I ever got to know and probably the first I had ever seen in action, Mackenzie" (personal

communication, September 11, 2015). The BSU campus ministry, under the leadership of her campus ministers, was influential. Kim shared, “That is where I exercised my own leadership skills and found the ability to be able to use my gifts” (personal communication, September 11, 2015). Kim entered college as an English major, but realized her love for teaching, and changed to be an English Education major. However, she shared, “. . . by the time I student taught, I felt called to ministry” (personal communication, September 11, 2015). She began to explore this call because she felt more alive preparing and leading things for the BSU than she did doing anything else she loved to do, such as singing or reading. At the time, she was dating a conservative guy who was also involved in the BSU who did not understand or acknowledge her call. They eventually ended their relationship. During this confusing time, Kim received encouragement from Randy, the pastor of Avenue Church, and Mackenzie, her campus minister. During this process, Kim decided to apply for a summer missionary appointment.

Kim applied to be a summer missionary through BSU and was placed at Bluebird Baptist Church. During her time at Bluebird, Kim got to explore her call even more. She was invited to give her testimony from the pulpit and was mentored by many other ministers, two of whom were women. That summer, she got to talk with these mentors about seminary choices and next steps. Kim shared, “I have to at least see if God opens the next door and I got so affirmed from Bluebird in terms of—you have gifts for this, you need to at least take the next steps and see” (personal communication, September 11,

2015). This summer missionary appointment inspired Kim to look forward to theological education as she continued to work through her call.

Applying to seminary was a task. Kim was still mindful of finances and needed scholarships to attend any seminary. She had a fellowship opportunity at one school, which required a weekend visit. The weekend visit included an interview; the interview was a horrible experience for Kim. Another divinity school offered Kim a full scholarship without such an interview, so she ended up choosing it. She talked about worshiping in the chapel there, and how it felt warm and welcoming, like home.

Kim's time in divinity school was intriguing as she got to read, learn and write, some of her favorite things. However, she often once again felt like a stranger in a strange land. The school was affiliated with the Methodist denomination, so issues such as the struggle for Baptist women in ministry were hard for some Methodist students to understand. During divinity school, Kim served a year placement as a campus ministry intern at a near-by university. She also did another internship at Bluebird Baptist Church. Both internships allowed Kim the freedom to lead and serve. As a campus ministry intern, she helped plan worship and mentored college students. At Bluebird, she preached several times. These two intern experiences were just as formative and educational as her class experiences. After graduating, Kim was ordained at Bluebird Baptist Church, because it had come to mean so much to her. While Kim was in divinity school, she met Andy. They married between her second and third year of course work. As the divinity school experience began to come to a close, Kim began thinking about professional opportunities.

While Kim was finishing up divinity school, Andy had already found a ministry position. He served as an interim pastor while he was in divinity school, and then moved to Highland Baptist Church soon after he graduated. While he served as the pastor of Highland Baptist church, Kim said, “. . . I was very much a pastor’s wife” (personal communication, September 11, 2015). The church viewed Kim as a pastor’s wife, that is not how she viewed herself. Then Kim went through CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) and did an internship at a hospital. Kim said, “So, that also got me away from Highland and I could have my own identity as a pastor and after that first thing of CPE, then I did an extended unit at the VA that was part-time, and I loved that” (personal communication, September 11, 2015). After two more residencies at the hospital, Kim began to look for other chaplaincy and educational opportunities. She even pondered going for more theological education, but decided to put that on hold. Eventually she received an offer to work as a part-time chaplain at a retirement village.

Kim served as a chaplain at a retirement village for six years, where she got to preach, do pastoral care, and serve communion. While serving at the retirement village, she had three children. They worked with her schedule and gave her as much maternity leave as she needed. Kim and her family had found home. She was content in her ministry. Andy was content as the Pastor of Highland. Highland was gracious and kind as their children grew-up. However, as her children grew older, Kim began thinking about the theology her children were learning. She said, “I did not want to raise our children with that same broken theology that I had grown up with and it is still in there” (personal communication, September 11, 2015). Kim and Andy began praying and

looking for other ministry opportunities. An opportunity arose for Andy to be the pastor of Wetherington Baptist Church, and after much prayer and discussion they decided to move, which meant Kim had to give up her position at the retirement village. When they moved, Kim took a few months to help the family transition and then began to look for ministry opportunities. There were some retirement villages around, but none were seeking a chaplain. While she was without a formal ministry position, she did some ministry and curriculum-based writing. She became involved in a Baptist women's ministry organization, took opportunities to preach at other churches, and began a ministry blog. She also continued to care for her family. After many years of doing itinerant preaching, Kim was asked to be the interim pastor at a church not far from Wetherington. Kim served as the interim pastor at Crossroads Church and was once again given the opportunity to preach, teach, plan worship, and provide pastoral care.

Just recently, Kim and Andy made another move. After being at Wetherington for over 10 years, they moved out of state to serve another church. Kim admitted this move was mostly for her. This church hired Andy and Kim to serve as ministers together. While Kim had great fear and doubt about this move, they were excited about the opportunity.

Kim was raised in the faith by her family and family continues to be an important aspect of her story. Even though she grew up in a church amid dysfunction and discouragement, she continued to love God and the church. Settings of education and service-learning provided opportunities for Kim to explore and practice her call. Kim learned to minister by doing.

Conclusion of Stories

Callie Jean, Dawn, Evelyn, June, and Kim are the five women who have served as the basis for this research project. The previous stories are just snapshots of their lives, for in no way can a few pages depict the entirety of their lives. Each of their life stories and call experiences are unique and special. While each of their stories was unique, there were common themes that arose from a detailed analysis of their stories and interviews. The second part of this chapter will seek to identify some of the common themes that existed in the stories of these Baptist women ministers.

Common Themes

Narrative research allows for a detailed look into the stories of research participants. For this project, the stories of five Baptist women ministers were told, captured, and analyzed. While this research cherished the uniqueness of each individual woman's story, it also sought to find common themes and similarities to aid in the overall goal to help Baptist individuals and churches nurture the call experiences of Baptist women ministers. The following themes emerged from these stories: family, early church involvement, Christian service, ministerial role models, education, affirmation, discouragement, and personal doubt. The last part of this chapter explores the major themes and minor themes, as well as the existence of silences and selectivities in relation to the themes that emerged.

Family

Family was a major theme in the stories of the Baptist women ministers. Most of the women began their stories by telling about their birth family. These women were

introduced to the Christian faith and church involvement by their families. Family continued to be an important aspect of their lives as they matured and established their own family units. Family was important to their identity, faith, and ministry.

Callie Jean began her story with the statement, “I am the daughter of a Baptist minister” (personal communication, September 14, 2015). She later shared, “family probably came up as the focus of my faith . . . family is the focus of my faith and probably the backbone of my journey . . .” (personal communication, November 29, 2016). Callie Jean also shared about her parents, “My dad did the leadership part of the church and um, but my mom did the leadership in the family and she did service in the home and with others” (personal communication, November 29, 2016). Callie Jean learned different aspects of Christian service from her parents. Christian faith and service were important to her family dynamic, which made a profound impact. Callie Jean did not get married until later in life. She shared, “now I know why that (having a life partner) is so cool for people that serve in ministry” (personal communication, October 27, 2015). Callie Jean shared a story of the impact a white Bible ceremony had on her at a young age. The women of the church would give a white Bible to young women before they got married. She said, “you could carry it down with you or make it the center of your home” (personal communication, September 14, 2015). This experience had such an impact, Callie Jean found a white Bible on a trip to the Holy Land, and carried it during her own wedding. While she was single for much of her professional ministry she said, “being single on the other hand was as well; I reached a group of people in my churches that I served in that were unique that the other ministers didn’t meet” (personal

communication, October 27, 2015). Callie Jean's birth family was a great influence on her life, faith and calling. Being a single adult allowed her to minister to the singles of the churches she ministered in, and being married showed her the joy in having someone to share in the work of ministry.

Family was a theme in Dawn's story, but not as much as Callie Jean's. Dawn's mother introduced her to the Christian faith and church involvement, but her dad was not as involved in her spiritual upbringing. Dawn shared very little about her brother, but said, "it is interesting because my brother, he won't have anything to do with the church now . . . Yeah, so we went in two totally different directions with the same upbringing" (personal communication, September 15, 2016). Dawn shared more about her marriage relationship than her birth family. Dawn met her husband James in seminary, where they were both studying to be ministers. James had "a deeply held belief that ministers can't get married to each other because that is just, that is too much on the family, and then we get married. So, fell in love, planned a wedding while working and going to school at the same time" (personal communication, September 15, 2015). In the beginning, they struggled with being a clergy couple. They looked for a position together, but decided that would not be best for them. Eventually, "James kind of decided that, you are the one with the stronger call at this point. You feel called to church ministry, you are good at church ministry. You look, let's base it around you" (personal communication, September 15, 2015). James supported Dawn enough to give up his pursuit of ministry. He did serve in another ministry position, but later decided to pursue another career in nursing, and continued to support Dawn by volunteering to help her in her ministry.

James' support was an important aspect of Dawn's story. Dawn's family introduced her to the faith and church, and her marriage continued to be a huge part of her life and ministry.

Evelyn's family was an important theme throughout her story. Her mother and father married when her mother was 16 years old. Twelve years after they married, Evelyn was born and two years later, Evelyn's brother was born. Her mother was a media specialist and her father was a butcher. Her mother went to college while Evelyn was in elementary school; "when I was in fourth grade, she finally graduated from college and then she took the test to be trained and be the media specialist" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Perhaps this is where Evelyn learned to value education. Evelyn's father was an alcoholic, but stopped drinking when she was about second grade. When Evelyn was a teenager, her father became involved in the training ministry of the church, and Evelyn began to help him with training at local churches. Evelyn's birth family introduced her to the importance of education and church service, things that evolved throughout Evelyn's life story. Evelyn married her high school boyfriend, Alvin, 4 days after his military graduation. As a military family, they moved a lot; "he served 22 years, in 22 years we lived 27 different places" (personal communication, September 10, 2015). During their marriage, they had two children and adopted a son. Evelyn's husband was a continual presence of support throughout her life. When asked who she shared her call with she said, "The only person that I really shared that with was my husband" (personal communication, October 26, 2015). She described him as "a stalwart supporter and a theological companion" (personal communication,

November 28, 2016). After his time in the military, her husband became an engineer and eventually taught engineering on the college level. A struggle for their marriage and family when Evelyn faced new ministry opportunities, was finding meaningful employment for Alvin. Evelyn shared a little about her children. One of her daughters, Alyssa, studied Christian education, and shared some of her books with Evelyn. Alyssa married John, who ended up getting a Ph.D. in New Testament. Evelyn shared of the joys of having her children and grandchildren participate in her ministry, “when we started the new church at Christmas, the congregation was small and we didn’t have many musicians and the children, my grandchildren, were taking violin, so on Christmas Eve, they played as a part of the Christmas Eve service” (personal communication, November 28, 2015). She also shared the struggles of balancing ministry and family. Of all her family, Evelyn’s husband, Alvin, had the most impact on her call to ministry.

Family was a huge theme in June’s story. She began her story by sharing about her birth family dynamic. Her mother and father were from two different ethnic backgrounds. Her father’s family was loving and affectionate and enjoyed spending time together, while her mother’s family was a little more reserved. June’s paternal grandmother was a huge influence on her life saying, “my faith was formed by her” (personal communication, September 22, 2015). Her paternal grandmother’s family immigrated to the United States to escape religious persecution. “My grandmother, um, all of her children where Christian” (personal communication, September 22, 2015). Her mother’s family was not as religious, but it was her mother who took her to church as a child. June’s mother and father separated when she was young, but did not officially

divorce until much later; “So my mother and father had a friendship, but they could not live together” (personal communication, September 22, 2015). June had a difficult relationship with her mother as a young adult and her father died before she had children. June married her husband, Terry soon after graduating from college. He was in the military. June said, “We have lived in 12 locations in 21 years” (personal communication, September 22, 2015). June and Terry went through the loss of a child, which impacted their lives immensely. It was a tragic situation, where June also almost died. Following the death of their daughter, Tracy, they eventually had two other children. June admitted her experience with Tracy changed the way she parented her children and it probably impacted how she ministers. Terry was one of June’s biggest supporters when she decided to pursue her call to the ministry. June struggled with reflecting on her story and how it impacted her children saying, “your call is bigger than, than what you, than what I even realized, and I don’t think the effect of all of that was apparent to me at the time” (personal communication, November 29, 2016). She said, “My son did not end up staying in the church, once he graduated from high school, he is not. My daughter on the other hand is teaching Sunday School still. So I struggle with that some, and wonder if I affected him more than I thought” (personal communication, September 22, 2015). June’s family impacted her life and faith. Her father’s mother taught her the importance of faith, and her mother showed her the importance of church. Her husband affirmed her, supported her in her call, and walked with her throughout her journey. June struggled with the effect her ministry had on her children. June’s family was woven throughout her story.

Along with June, Kim's family was included as a major part of her story. Her mother and father were from small town roots. Her mother exposed her to a love for books and learning. Kim shared a story of visiting the library, "and mother did not put limits on how many (books) we could get" (personal communication, September 11, 2015). Her father was her spiritual mentor; "he played a huge role just in terms of being such a sounding board and just to say this happened, and he is also, I mentioned things, but dad was much better about looking things in the face" (personal communication, July 14, 2016). Her parents valued education and impacted Kim's pursuit of education, as she shared, "Both my parents had master's degrees, and my mother has a specialist degree, which is like a second Master's degree" (personal communication, October 16, 2015). Her parents remained constant supporters of her throughout her life and ministry. Kim married Andy, a pastor she met in divinity school. She struggled with her role as a pastor's wife. She said,

And bless his heart, he has been so supportive of me in so many ways and early on I was like, you should have married a secretary or a nurse or a teacher, because you, I know the traditional preacher's wife thing, because I just know . . . know . . . and I love church, I do. I am in love with the church and the body of Christ. (personal communication, September 11, 2015)

As a minister and wife of a minister, Kim struggled to find her own place of ministry. However, when she found the position at the retirement village, she regained her ministry purpose. While her husband served at Highland Baptist Church, and she served at the retirement village, they had three children. As their children grew, Kim became concerned that they would experience the same oppressive conservative church structure

that she did as a child. After much prayer and searching, Andy got a position at Wetherington Baptist Church and the family moved. The move did not provide many professional opportunities for Kim. When the family was faced with the possibility of moving once again, Kim thought of her children. The move provided a place for Andy and her to serve on the same church staff, but meant moving their children away from the home they had created. The decision to move was difficult, because family was so important to Kim, because the presence and support of family was a constant theme in Kim's story.

Family was the first theme present in the stories of these five Baptist women ministers. All of them began their stories with telling about their birth families. All of them shared the influence, support, and struggles within their families. Their birth families were important to their introduction to the faith and church life, and their family units were important to the living out of their callings. Churches and Baptist individuals can learn from the importance of family in relation to faith. Baptist families need to better understand their role in faith formation. Churches need to understand the importance of the family unit and learn better ways to minister to families. Many of these women also struggled with the influence their life and ministry had on their children. The call to professional ministry is a personal call, but it has impact beyond the individual. Baptist individuals and churches need to understand the struggles of ministry and family to better encourage and care for, not just ministers, but also their families. The call to professional ministry is a personal call, but it has impact beyond the individual.

Early Church Involvement

All five of the Baptist women ministers included stories of church attendance and influence as young children. All the women were reared in families that were dedicated, to varying degrees, to the Christian faith and greatly influenced by church culture. While Evelyn only briefly mentioned her early church involvement, as she talked about her parents being members of the local First Baptist Church, she later shared stories of her service within the church as a teenager, which will be included later in discussion on the theme of church service. The other four women seemed to be impacted by their early church involvement.

Callie Jean was the daughter of a Baptist pastor. She shared, “Church was always the center of our life” (personal communication, September 15, 2015). Many of the stories Callie Jean shared of her childhood were stories about church life and ministry with her family. She shared that she, her brother, and her sister would even “play church” as young children. After Callie Jean had the opportunity to review her story she shared,

And so, everything and I feel like I have a lot of groundedness in church, a lot more than I thought, although I should not have been surprised, I have been in church all my life. From a young child as a GA, a Sunbeam, um a pastor’s child, Sunday School, youth groups—I was in different ones because my dad moved churches and we moved communities and we dealt with different things, but it was interesting and very affirming to me to see how involved I was from early on and that lead me to where I am today—to pursue summer missionary experience in college and then to go into seminary—although I didn’t know that I wanted to. (personal communication, November 29, 2016)

Church involvement was a huge theme throughout Callie Jean's story. Her early church involvement was influenced by her parents, but she continued to be involved in church throughout her life.

Dawn also became involved in church early on in life through the influence of her mom. She shared,

I grew up in a home where church was always valued by my mother. Um not so much—my father grew up Catholic and my mother grew up Baptist—and so my dad he grew up Catholic but had decided you know—well I have had my fill. So, my mom, my brother and I were there every Sunday. Every time the door was open . . . (personal communication, September 15, 2015)

Dawn, her mother and brother were very active in the life and ministry of the church.

Dawn said, “So, um, so I mean really it wasn’t an option not to go to church—that is something is happening and you are there. You get the church calendar and you plan your summers around it” (personal communication, September 15, 2015). Dawn’s mother was the preschool Sunday school director, a nursery worker, and helped plan children’s ministry events. Dawn’s early church involvement was about more than just attending church, “So, that idea of you are a part of a church, you plug in and you do things, you don’t just come and participate—that was very much part of my childhood” (personal communication, September 15, 2015). Dawn was involved in the life of the church at an early age and began to learn the importance of service within the church as she watched her mother.

June began her church life in the Church of God. Though June’s paternal grandmother was influential in her faith life, it was her mother, not her father, who took

her to church. June, her mom, and brother spent a few years in the Church of God, where June made her profession of faith, and then became involved in a Southern Baptist Church, where she was baptized. While at the Baptist church, June became involved in the mission programs. June shared,

. . . we did Acteens and GA's—whatever it was called then—and I went up through the ranks and was the Queen of the Scepter . . . Un, huh, it is a big deal. I memorized scripture. I memorized a Bible study and I recited all that, and all these different steps you do and that was really important. (personal communication, September 22, 2016)

GAs and Acteens were popular ministries of Southern Baptist Churches during this time. It was an honor to be chosen as Queen with a Scepter for the end-of-the-year celebration of these ministries, and such an honor took consistent attendance and dedication to the program. June also shared stories of participating in the youth choir as a teenager and going on her first mission trip with the choir. June had early experience with the church, but her involvement lessened while she was in college and she did not get involved in church life again years after she and her husband were married.

Kim was involved in church life as a young child. She shared about her “home” church, but also shared of early memories of visiting church with her extended family. Kim shared,

Um, and then the church we went to had like 2,000 members and it was big—of course, not that many people came to church. But it was big and they had a big music program and my mother was in it . . . I went to kindergarten there. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Kim's family was involved in a large church when she was a child. She spent time on the weekends, and even weekdays during her kindergarten year. They were active in the many ministries of the church, but Kim said, "it was not overall a positive experience" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). Kim shared positive pieces of her early church experiences, for example, her third- and ninth-grade Sunday School teachers. However, she also shared stories of a lack of grace and the burden of conservative theology. She later shared, "I went to this really conservative church. Very, very—boys do these things, girls do these things—blaaaaa, never the two shall meet" (personal communication, July 14, 2016). As a child, the church Kim attended split. Her family visited other churches, but eventually returned to that church. While Kim's early church involvement was not as positive as some, she was still exposed to the Christian faith and church life. Even though Kim had some negative early church experiences, she had other positive experiences when she went to church with her family. She shared,

Um, and so, you know again I still had those experiences like at my mammaw's church where my cousin Bob went, where I would go when I would stay with her in the summers. I would go with him and do stuff with them and they were great. They had people from sixth grade to young adults doing stuff together and the young adults just took us under their wing and I loved it . . . (personal communication, September 11, 2015)

Kim said she felt "very welcomed" and "at home" at her mammaw's church, even though she was not a regular attender. Feeling "at home" at church was important to Kim. Even though her early church involvement was not always positive, it did have an impact on Kim's life and calling.

Early church attendance and involvement had a predominant influence on the lives of these women. These women were reared within the context of Christian community. Throughout their lives, they stayed connected on various levels to the institution of the church. I am not naïve enough to think that all Baptist women who have experienced a call to the ministry were raised in the church or had similar experiences as children in the church as the women of this study. However, for these women, involvement in the church at a young age made a difference in their lives and had a lasting effect on their callings and future careers. From this understanding of the importance of church in the lives of these women, churches need to pay attention to the young children in their midst. Early childhood is a very formative time. Children learn through experiences. Church involvement allows people to see the importance of Christian ministry in people's lives, learn about God's work in individuals and the world, and experience examples of God's work, all of which may encourage people to examine their calls.

Church and Christian Service

Another theme that surfaced after collecting and coding the narratives was opportunities to serve in the church. Each woman had opportunities to serve, lead, and minister within the church before being called to ministry. The opportunity to serve allowed these women to exercise and explore their giftedness, passions, and calls.

Callie Jean experienced the importance of church service from the time she was born. She shared stories of watching her dad preach and minister to others and watching her mom lead women and minister to others. Callie Jean started serving in the church as

a teenager. She said, “I started leading in church like helping with VBS, working in day camps” (personal communication, September 14, 2015). As a teenager, Callie Jean also served at a local lodge for a summer camp program where she helped serve meals, but also got to attend some of the classes and training sessions. While in college, Callie Jean applied and served as a summer missionary through the Baptist Student Union. During that summer experience, Callie Jean shared her testimony for the first time, overcoming her fear of speaking with a slight stutter, led backyard Bible clubs and such, and experienced her first gender prejudice. She shared,

But our pastor that we worked with really resented my partner. He liked me, but see I am shaking and quaking in my boots, so I am seeming probably pretty submissive in some ways and she is bold, ready to go minister. She is a senior and is getting ready to go to seminary and she knows her calling. She is very musical. He would not let her lead the music that they needed, so he wanted her to train this gentleman that we were staying with to host us for the summer. He had no musical talent at all, she could not get him to carry a tune, much less know how to do. But he would, he would not let her stand up in this little- we were not even in a church building, we were in this little building and he would not let her stand up front—and that was my first time I had ever encountered that kind of gender prejudice. (personal communication, September 14, 2015)

Eventually, Callie Jean’s partner was sent to another appointment. Callie Jean learned the difficulties of ministry service, including opposition for women. This experience did not keep Callie Jean from continued service in the church. After college, she began teaching Sunday School and GAs at her home church. Her service in the church continued through her seminary journey, after which she began her professional ministry career. Callie Jean experienced church service modeled by her parents at a young age, and followed suit. She used her gift and passion for teaching and missions to serve in the

church through mission opportunities. Her church service equipped her for the blessings and challenges of professional ministry.

Dawn began her personal church service with her mother in the nursery. She shared, “And there was a period of my life where I was probably in the nursery helping more than I was sitting in church” (personal communication, September 15, 2015). As a child, Dawn continued to aid her mother in the many ministries she was involved in within the church. Dawn’s passion for service within the church grew under the leadership of her youth minister, Mel. Mel was a great encouragement and role model to Dawn and she “would help him with things” (September 15, 2015). As a teenager, she spent a lot of time at the church helping prepare for ministry events and programs. In college, Dawn was involved in the Baptist Student Union, where she served and led in ministry for and with other college students. One summer during college she worked for a Christian camp for kids. Before that summer, Dawn had struggled with school, and life and faith, but serving on the camp staff helped her through that time. She shared,

I was kind of broken. I don’t know who I am. I don’t know if I am supposed to be this person. I feel kind of like a fraud going in into it and as a part of the camp staff, there is a day where you share your stuff just to get it out there. I was like, they are going to kick me off this team after I share all that I am dealing with . . . and they didn’t! Um, and they, we loved each other. We worked together. Um, we trusted each other to do stuff. I mean I was teaching Bible study and directing dramas and doing all these things just like—okay maybe there is something to this after all. Maybe this is the direction that I am supposed to be heading. Um, so crazy summer. Intense summer, but healing summer. Just being allowed to minister and ministering with people. (personal communication, September 15, 2015)

Working at camp allowed Dawn the opportunity to teach and lead and in doing ministry, allowing her to grow in her understanding of God and herself. During another summer in college, Dawn applied and was accepted into a collegiate mission program to go to a foreign country. She said,

In the Inner City with the Community Life Center with um, working with kids. It was a day care and kids who—the parents at that point paid the equivalent of seven US dollars a month. So, it was really to help those underprivileged, needed the child care, um, so lived and worked at that church with those kids for two months. It was great and hard, but they were great. Um, and just that really kind of opened my eyes to Christianity outside um, United States and how God values the oppressed and the forgotten and those in need. (personal communication, September 15, 2015)

Dawn's church service began as a child, and continued. She worked at a camp for children, served children in a foreign country, and all before she had fully embraced her call to professional ministry. After embracing her call, she continued to serve in the church as an intern, and later as a full-time children's minister. Dawn's service opportunities not only taught her about the importance of church and service, but also challenged her to think differently about faith, life, ministry to others, and her calling.

Evelyn began serving in the church as a teenager. She first served by using her musical gifts and playing the organ. Evelyn shared,

And then when I was, oh I guess when I was about 13 or 15, there was a little mission church that met in the afternoon and they asked me to play the piano out there and so that is what they did. They told me this Sunday what songs they were going to play the next Sunday, so I went home and practiced them. (personal communication, September 10, 2015)

Evelyn also played the organ at her home church when the pastor's wife could not play. When Evelyn was 16 she was asked to teach the youth class at the mission church. She would teach the lesson she had been taught at her home church the week before. As a teenager, she also helped her dad who was the associational training director. She shared, "And so I was a teenager and when he did these regional training things, I was the one, so I was the one that ran the intermediate groups" (personal communication, October 26, 2015). As a teenager, Evelyn was serving and leading in the church setting. She played the organ for worship, taught teenagers, and helped lead adult training. Her service taught her the value of preparation and leadership.

June did not begin serving in the church until adulthood. As a youth, she participated in the youth choir and served on a summer mission trip. As a college student and young adult, June was not involved in church, and therefore did not serve within the church. After she got married and her husband was placed overseas, she played the piano for a small church. When they moved back to the United States, she and her husband became more involved in church life. When they moved to another state, June began to get involved in church service. She shared, "I did a Mommy and Me program for 35 kids and families and I did it twice a week. I was the one that organized it and kept it going. I did choir as well, the children's choir—it was all volunteer work. Sang in the choir and loved it. Loved it" (personal communication, November 3, 2015). They moved again, and she became involved in Lay Minister's Ministry. She said,

So, I um, took theses classes—it took 9 months or 8 months—however many months it took and was fully accepted into the program. I, um, was assigned a woman that had Alzheimer's so in that sense it was difficult, but um, I was able to

do some things with her and felt like I was helping. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

During her service in the Lay Minister's Ministry, June learned the importance of her gift for listening as ministry. When they moved and began attending Cross Baptist Church, June was asked to teach the fifth-grade Sunday School Class. She said, “. . . I had not taught Sunday school, so I was curious that they would think I could” (personal communication, September 22, 2015). At Cross Baptist, June began to serve more in the church and eventually served as the interim children's minister. June's church service allowed her to discover her gifts for ministry, which led to her entering divinity school and exploring professional ministry.

Kim did not begin the bulk of her church service until college. However, she shared a little taste of early church service in a story she told of taking up the offering at her grandmother's church as a young girl. It was Kim's involvement in the Baptist Student Union that allowed her the opportunity for Christian service. Kim helped plan worship, lead Bible studies, and lead two women's discipleship groups. She shared, “That is where I exercised my own leadership skills and found the ability to be able to use my gifts” (personal communication, September 11, 2015). Kim later said, “I felt more alive doing those things than I did anything else” (personal communication, September 11, 2015). In college, Kim continued to serve in the church through her summer mission appointment at Bluebird Baptist Church. She said, “I was supposed to be helping with the youth—but also helped with worship and all sorts of stuff and taught the college Sunday School class . . .” (personal communication, October 16, 2015).

Kim's church service did not begin until opportunities arose through her involvement in Baptist Student Union in college. Once Kim began to serve, she found her passion, and began to explore ministry as a profession.

For years, even decades, Baptist women were denied opportunities to serve in certain roles of the church ministry and Christian service. However, it was evident this trend did not keep these women from serving. Each woman in this study served in areas of church and Christian service before going into professional ministry. Some served as children and youth; others began serving as young adults. These women exercised their gifts and talents in various ways within the church and ministry context. These experiences allowed the women to explore and be affirmed in their calling, through service. Understanding the importance of these opportunities to serve, churches need to intentionally involve women in church ministry, leadership roles, and Christian service opportunities to allow for exploration and give affirmation to their giftedness and/or callings.

Ministerial Role Models

Because these women were involved in church at early ages and served within the church, it was not surprising that ministerial role models surfaced as a theme. These women learned from the ministers they saw living out their own calling.

Callie Jean's most prominent minister role model was her father. She watched her father minister daily. She said, "My father was always busy with church, and with people he was always fun. He was very dedicated to his work and to his people. He grieved with them. He prayed with them. He counseled them. He went to jail with

them” (personal communication, September 14, 2015). She continued to explain that one time she found her dad’s picture in the paper going into the police office with a man. The man was a relative of a church member and was taken in for questioning and her father went with him for support. Callie Jean also shared a story of going to the funeral home with her father,

When I was in third grade, I can remember, my dad taking me to a funeral home, uh, to somebody I did not know and he was just going in to speak to them. He did not know them well—that was just his way of showing me and teaching me about death. He had been talking to me about it and it was someone that I was not really personally related to, and I remember that as my first experience, and when my grandfather died about 4 years later, I don’t know, it kind of brought me comfort that, that was not the first person that I saw that had died. Now I don’t remember looking at this person—I believe it was a man—I just remember all of the people there and, and talking about you comforting there. (personal communication, September 14, 2015)

Callie Jean’s father was intentional in teaching Callie Jean and her siblings about ministry. He often took them to revivals and involved them in his work at the church. As she got older, Callie Jean also watched her dad navigate the changing climate of the Southern Baptist Convention. Throughout his years as a pastor, he served in leadership within Southern Baptist life on the associational, state, and national levels. Callie Jean said, “He was pulled in with preachers and connected and on SBC life he served on boards and stuff. So I knew of the upcoming controversy and it was real and very alive in my family” (personal communication, September 14, 2015). All her life, she watched her dad minister, through the highs and lows of life, ministry, and denominational politics. Having her dad as a role model gifted her with a realistic view of ministry. Callie Jean also had other minister role models, even some women. Throughout their

different churches, she remembered a woman youth minister, a woman education minister, and two women music ministers, but only mentioned those women, as her father was her main role model for professional ministry.

Dawn's first ministerial role model was her Aunt Joan. Dawn's Aunt Joan served as a minister from the time Dawn was born; therefore, Dawn grew up seeing and knowing personally a Baptist woman minister. Dawn said, "Um, I mean I knew God called people because I knew God called my aunt" (personal communication, November 29, 2016). Dawn also had other minister role models. As a youth in church, she experienced a rotating door of youth ministers because her church was located near a seminary. Dawn was impacted by her experience with one woman youth minister, Sarah. She shared,

Um, when I was in eighth grade, um, we had a new youth minister who had been my piano teacher for many years and I knew her. And she decided to kind of stick her toe in the ministry waters, um, and my mom also babysat her kids, so she was much like part of my family—um, and things were going great. (personal communication, September 15, 2015)

After a while, Sarah and her husband separated and she became pregnant with another man's child. Dawn watch as all of this unfolded in the church. The church asked Sarah to resign; however, in the process, Dawn watched as the church supported and loved Sarah, standing in support of her and offering her encouragement. Dawn said, "that was the church stopping for a moment and being the church" (personal communication, September 15, 2015). Sarah and this situation had a profound impact on Dawn. After Sarah, Dawn's church hired a new youth minister, Mel. Dawn began to volunteer to help

Mel out at the church and Mel encouraged Dawn in her gifts for ministry. Dawn said, “Um, so and it was his leadership that helped with a lot of the dysfunction within the congregation. He had a good awareness of systems and he knew how to deal with those things and he was able to bring peace and stability to the congregation” (personal communication, September 15, 2015). In college, Dawn was involved in BSU and had two women college ministers. Dawn had another male pastoral influence in John, a pastor at the church she attended for a while in college. Dawn plugged into the church John pastored after hearing him speak at BSU,

. . . what was inspiring about that was the pastor came and spoke at BSU on Tuesday night and his wife had just recently had a miscarriage and it was one of the new anniversaries of September 11st. I mean this was 2003–2004, and he was just vulnerable um, with us about you know loss and this and that. And I remember sitting there thinking, I have never heard a pastor be this honest before, so I want to go to his church, so um plugged in that church. (personal communication, September 15, 2015)

Dawn later reached out to John when she was pondering her own call to professional ministry and he encouraged her to continue to examine a call. Dawn had profound ministerial role models in her life. From an early age, she experienced a woman minister and throughout her spiritual journey, she had women and men ministerial role models who showed her what it meant to minister and encouraged her in her own journey and calling.

Evelyn had an early pastoral influence in Preacher Jack, who was her pastor and the father of her best friend. She shared,

Okay, his name is Preacher Jack and he was the first real minister that I saw and I was over there so much. Every now and then they would talk about some of the people of the church—the old ladies that called on Monday morning and all that kind of stuff—and then, but then I saw his compassion about people that were sick and that were having hardships in the church. I just remember that—I mean he was not like a second father or anything, but he was a model of what a minister was and I got to watch that up close. (personal communication, September 10, 2015)

Preacher Jack was Evelyn's first minister role model and she saw him inside and outside of the church and he showed her the importance of compassion. Later in life, Evelyn served on church staffs and had an opportunity to work with and learn from other male ministers. When she worked at College Presbyterian Church, she worked with pastor who was "very gracious, and, and helped me wonder through their baptism" (personal communication, November 28, 2016). At another church, she worked with a pastor whose "sermons were provocative and thoughtful" and who "was a really wonderful model in terms of church administration" (personal communication, November 28, 2016). Another pastor she worked for was an "excellent preacher and just . . . oh gosh . . . just his sermons, um, were rich in scripture, but he knew how to pull illustrations from his life and from literature" (personal communication, November 28, 2016). Another pastor she said, "was not a great preacher, but he was extremely relational and he managed an incredibly skilled staff" (personal communication, November 28, 2016). These ministers influenced Evelyn's understanding and personal practice of ministry. Through their models, she learned the importance of compassion, preaching, administration, and relationships for effective ministry.

June did not share any minister role models in her early years, but later in life was impacted by several ministers. Her husband served in the military, so each base had chaplains. During one appointment, they met a chaplain and his wife who were also going through orientation, they “became really good friends and both of us got involved in church” (personal communication, September 22, 2015). This chaplain was with June and Terry during the loss of their first child, Tracy, and even baptized her in the hospital before she died. The friendship June and her husband formed with this chaplain and his wife helped them get back to being involved in church life and helped them through one of the toughest times of their lives. Another pastoral influence June shared was a negative one. When they moved to another state and began looking for a new church, they visited a Baptist church where, they wanted to have Jeremy, their son, dedicated. The pastor would not dedicate Jeremy because Terry had not been baptized by immersion. June said,

He was kind of cool towards us about that and insistent. So, we stopped going there. He also, on a side note, wanted to build a church and he wanted the congregation to turn in their, um, insurance, you know whole life insurance policies and donate it to the church, and they were gonna, he got that place built. He really did! But we left! We thought it was a little excessive. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

June experienced the extremes of pastoral example, compassion and callousness. Later, her ministerial role models included a children’s minister at the church she later served as the children’s ministry interim, and the dean of the divinity school she attended, who encouraged her to continue in ministry even when the church did not want to hire her as

their children's minister. June's ministerial influences showed her a variety of ministry models and influenced how she later chose to minister.

Kim also experienced a variety of ministerial role models in her life. Her early ministerial role models were not positive. She shared stories of Dr. Mike Carroll, who she called the "screamy preacher," because he would scream as he preached his sermons. She said, "He scared me! He yelled and screamed and marched around" (personal communication, September 11, 2015). She was also influenced by Brother Mark, the children's minister at her home church. Kim shared this story about Brother Mark,

Another that he did that was really crazy is that he had us all say what was our favorite TV show and at that time there was this show called, 'Those Amazing Animals,' I think is what it was called—this would have been in the 70s and early 80s. I just thought it was fascinating and very educational, but it came on Sunday nights and a bunch of us raised our hands. I think maybe we had filled something out and he was looking at what we had written or something like that—and he said something to the effect of, as I remember it, "Well, I am disturbed about this. This show happens on Sunday night and that is when you should be here at church, at Sunday night church—at Sunday night church, so I think that says a lot when you all are saying that is your favorite show and it is happening at the same time as church, when you should be here." As if we could drive ourselves to Sunday night church. (personal communication, September 11, 2015)

While some of her early ministerial role models provided negative experiences, as she got older, Kim was influenced by more positive role models. When Kim became involved in her college campus ministry, she met her first women ministers, Mackenzie and Erin. During this time, she also began attending Avenue Church where Randy was the pastor. Randy encouraged Kim in discerning her call to ministry. During college, she took a summer missionary appointment at Bluebird Baptist Church, where she learned under the leadership of Paul and Fran. When talking about her appointment at Bluebird, Kim said,

The preacher was Paul and he was my supervisor—well actually my supervisor was the Associate there, his colleague was Fran and she was wonderful. She was another one—so how God designed that. I had Mackenzie just when I needed her. Erin at a distance and then Fran, she was actually my hands-on supervisor. (personal communication, September 11, 2015)

These ministerial influences were in great contrast to the influences of her childhood.

These ministers created comfortable spaces for Kim to serve and through serving discover her giftedness, and her own ministry ways.

Ministerial role models were seen throughout the stories of these five Baptist women ministers. It is important to note that only two of these women, Callie Jean and Dawn, had experience with women ministers as young children. Kim did not see a woman minister until college and Evelyn and June did not see women ministers until they were adults. However, the specific ministerial models mentioned were significant in their lives, call experiences, and ministries. The lack of women ministerial role models challenges Baptist churches to evaluate the existence of women ministers and the role that their existence, or lack of, has especially for children and youth during formative years. This theme also points to the ideas and importance of mentorship. Baptist ministers can be more mindful of their roles as role models and opportunities for mentoring believers, especially those called to professional ministry. This theme challenges Baptist ministers to evaluate their influence by being aware of the impact, both positive and negative, their leadership can have on those with whom they minister.

Education

Education was another important theme found in the stories of these Baptist women ministers. Education was important to their families and to the women

individually. All women went to college and later, divinity school or seminary to further their theological education. It is important to note, none of the women in this study went into college to study to be ministers. Callie Jean went to college to study to be a teacher. Dawn went to college to study English. Evelyn went to college to train to be a teacher. Kim went to college to study English and became an English education major. June went to college to study accounting and English. Education was important for these women throughout their lives.

The importance of education began early in Callie Jean's life. Callie Jean shared, "But dad told me early on that his grandfather, who had no formal education, told him, 'Son, you need to go to school and you need to get as much as you can because that is where you will learn how to articulate yourself'" (personal communication, October 27, 2015). Callie Jean graduated high school and went to the college where her parents met. Following college, Callie Jean went to work as a teacher, but soon decided to attend seminary. The choice to attend seminary was a difficult one. At first Callie Jean thought she would take the hours needed to apply to be a foreign missionary and use her teaching degree to teach on the foreign mission field. She said, "So, I went to seminary and I fell in love with learning again and I fell in love with that kind of learning" (personal communication, September 14, 2015). It was at this point Callie Jean made the decision to resign from her teaching position and continue with her seminary education, all while she was still trying to figure out her call and professional ministry opportunities. Seminary allowed Callie Jean time and space to explore her call. Following seminary, Callie Jean got a full-time professional ministry job, but continued to seek opportunities

to learn through training events, and later became one of the leaders and teachers of those trainings. She shared, “Because I am an educator too, so you go or you try to get trained” (personal communication, November 29, 2016). Callie Jean continued to be involved in the teaching and equipping of other ministers and volunteers. Education was important to Callie Jean’s story. Education was important to her family, to her career, and to her growing in the understanding of her calling. Her undergraduate focus in education helped her in the church context to teach children and to train others to teach. Her seminary education allowed her to explore the possibilities of her call. Education gave Callie Jean the tools needed to minister confidently.

Education was an on-going theme in Dawn’s story. She shared, “I have always loved school. I am the child of two teachers . . . Yeah, so education has always been very important. It wasn’t an option not to do well in school in my house . . . it was not an option” (personal communication, October 20, 2015). As the daughter of two school teachers, Dawn was encouraged to excel and pursue education at its highest level. She loved English class in high school and was encouraged to pursue an English major in college by one of her high school English teachers. Dawn said, “I mean I loved to read. I love to write and I loved to analyze what I read, so I was just kind of drawn to English classes and deepen that knowledge and get better at those skills” (personal communication, October 20, 2015). While in college, Dawn began exploring a call to the ministry, so she decided to respond by getting educated. Choosing a seminary was a difficult task, as her first instinct was to not attend the local seminary; however, she ended up attending that seminary. While in seminary, Dawn became the children’s

ministry intern at a local church. She said, “I loved working and going to school at the same time, because I could apply things in both directions” (personal communication, September 15, 2015). Her theological education obviously prepared her for ministry, but she also shared how her undergraduate studies helped in her ministry, “I mean good writing is an important part of ministry. Being a good communicator, whether it is from the pulpit or writing an email or doing something in the newsletter” (personal communication, October 20, 2015). Dawn enjoyed learning and applying what she learned. Her educational journey provided opportunities to stretch her understanding of God and herself.

June said she considered herself “a lifetime learner” (personal communication, November 29, 2016). She went to a junior college the year after high school due to financial constraints. The second year, she went to a four-year women’s college, where she attended until she graduated. Education was important to June’s mother, not just for the education experience, but for financial reasons. She shared,

I mean, I knew that I had to go into something—my mother because she was single all those years and my dad did not support us financially—there was no money. She wanted us to have a degree; it was very important for her. She wanted us to go to college, but, um, she wanted us to make money. We needed a job that made money. So, I was like, I took business administration for my mother and I did English for myself. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

For June’s mother, education was a means to a better life, free of financial struggles. June graduated and got married. She worked in accounting for eleven years and then stayed at home for years with her young children. It was when she considered going

back into accounting that she began feeling a call to ministry. Instead of going back into accounting, June ended up in divinity school. June entered divinity school to get some training as she served as the interim children's minister at her church. She said, "I could take some children's classes and check out this program and so I just did it part-time" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). She also said, "I loved going to school" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). After she was not hired as the full-time children's minister, June questioned whether she needed to continue her studies. She said her husband asked what she really wanted to do, and she said, "'I want to go to school and be in ministry,' and that was huge too, because we could have made a lot of money with me being an accountant" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). June enjoyed the challenges of divinity school and the time and space to think through and develop her own theology in the company of others doing the same thing. She said, "They are going to make you or challenge you and you got all these peers—it is a huge wonderful learning environment and that was huge. That was very, very good" (personal communication, September 22, 2015). The divinity school experience was enriching, especially after being denied the position at the church. After divinity school, June continued her education with 2 units of Clinical Pastoral Education, and a residency program. June continued to value education, as she has even pondered pursuing her doctorate. For June, education was practical, as it would provide opportunities for employment, but also enriching as she learned to embrace her own passions and desires and find ways to put them into practice.

Kim was also raised in a family that valued education. Both of her parents had master's degrees and excelled in academics. She said, "School was just a norm for us. You were expected to do your work, there wasn't any, you know, you just did it" (personal communication, October 16, 2015). Kim entered college as an English Education major. She shared,

I started out just English, then I realized that I really wanted teaching—some people piece to it—so I switched over to the School of Education. I think I did that my sophomore year, but, um, and but I—through the BS, by the time I student taught, I felt called to ministry. (personal communication, September 11, 2015)

Kim was interested in English because "the written word and story were fascinating" (personal communication, September 11, 2015). Even at a young age, Kim spent hours in the local library and reading. That love for stories help in her Biblical studies in divinity school and in preparing lessons and sermons. When Kim decided to apply to divinity school, she struggled with where to attend and needed a scholarship. After a defeating and difficult scholarship interview at what she thought was her first choice, she ended up with a full ride to another divinity school without the burden of a difficult scholarship interview. The divinity school experience was different for Kim; she was in the Baptist studies program at a Methodist divinity school and often struggled to relate to her Methodist peers. Kim shared her experience,

So, so divinity school was hard, it was hard, but I went and I am so glad I went there; again I graduated with no debt and that you know, I am sure there would be plenty of conservatives that would say it was all about the money. Well yeah, that is how God opened the door, was saying you, here is your way, you know. And then taking that one class with Dr. Good made everything else worth it and then

by my senior year, I had established myself. I had a side group of friends, I knew all of the professors, and I was much more at home. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Divinity school also provided opportunities to serve while going to school. Kim served as a campus minister intern and another summer at Bluebird Baptist church. These experiences provided practical and enriching learning, as well as encouragement and affirmation of her call. After divinity school, Kim also did CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education), which led her to her ministry at the retirement village. Kim continued to value education. She went back to divinity school for continuing education and pondered doing doctorate work. Education and excellence in education were themes throughout Kim's life story. She valued education, not just for the degree, but for the experiences it provided inside and outside the classroom.

Education played an important role in the lives of these women. They all included their undergraduate and graduate-school experiences in their stories. Education was important to their families, as all the women were encouraged to seek education beyond high school. Education was not just something that needed to be done, but something these women enjoyed. It was what these women turned to when they experienced a call to ministry. It is important to note, that education has been a theme in the work for women's rights, as many of the early supporters of women's rights focused on access to education. Education has been an important tool for women, especially in the professional arena, to break barriers and seek opportunities in a male-dominated society. Education was important to these women, and has been important for women throughout history, as a means of achieving their goals. For the women in this study,

education was not a chore, but an opportunity and a pleasure. Education was important for learning, but also for exploring their gifts and passions in relation to life and their call to ministry.

Affirmation

Affirmation of their calling was another theme seen throughout the stories of the five Baptist women ministers. Their affirmation came from people and experiences. The affirmation of their personal understanding of God's call was an important aspect of their pursuing professional ministry.

Callie Jean experienced affirmation mostly from people, experiences and personal study. Callie Jean's father affirmed her going into ministry. Callie Jean's brother had gone to seminary before her. However, Callie Jean said, "he let me discover stuff on my own . . . but he had good insight" (personal communication, October 27, 2015). She shared of a week-day preschool director she worked with, "I respected her completely. She knew her stuff back and forth and so we would share stuff together and we just loved each other. She has since passed away and she, um, but I will never forget her leadership of me" (personal communication, October 27, 2015). She also shared of a friendship with Mrs. Faith, an older woman, whom she met in seminary. They would attend CBF and women's ministry meetings together. Callie Jean described her as "very encouraging" (personal communication, October 27, 2015). Callie Jean was encouraged and affirmed by others throughout her journey in ministry. Secondly, she was encouraged through experiences. Callie Jean received affirmation when she served as a summer missionary in college. She also received affirmation through her work within the

church and as a teacher. Putting her gifts for ministry into practice allowed Callie Jean to experience affirmation from a job well done. Lastly, Callie Jean was affirmed by personal study, especially in a Master Life course as a young adult. Master Life was a rigorous adult Bible study. She began the program while she was teaching school. She said, “And you have a celebration of gifts at the end and it was very meaningful and I really felt led to go into ministry” (personal information, October 27, 2015). The Master Life group was one of the first places Callie Jean shared her desire to go into the ministry. People, experiences, and personal devotion affirmed Callie Jean in her call to professional ministry. These affirmations were important to Callie Jean as she pursued that call.

Dawn experienced affirmation of her call through people and doing the work of ministry. She shared, “I am fortunate to have a good support system that believe in me” (personal communication, October 20, 2015). Dawn was affirmed in her gifts for ministry as a teenager by her youth minister, Mel. She said, “He, he saw again the call in me . . . before I was able to acknowledge it in myself” (personal communication, September 15, 2015). She was also affirmed by John, the pastor of the church she attended in college. She met with him one day to talk about this call and expected discouragement; instead he said, “yeah, well maybe there is something to this” (personal communication, September 15, 2015). Soon after this conversation, Dawn shared with her mother that she was exploring a call to ministry. Her mother’s response was, “the second you walked across that stage at your high school graduation, I knew it” (personal communication, October 20, 2015). Dawn’s husband, James, also offered great

affirmation of her call. James and Dawn studied in seminary to be ministers, but James decided to pursue a different career in support of Dawn's professional ministry. She said, "My husband, you know him changing his career path was a big affirmation—this is what you are called to do, you are good at it, we are going to center our lives around this and not my career" (personal communication, October 20, 2015). After an exhausting summer of ministry, Dawn met with a group of women ministers and shared of her experience. One of the women, awed at how Dawn glowed as she talked about preaching and ministering, "she said, 'I see that calling in you'" (personal communication, September 15, 2015). Throughout her life, Dawn experienced affirmation of her gifts for ministry from the people around her. Along with affirmation from people, Dawn has also experienced affirmation in doing the work of ministry and enjoying it. As a teenager, she volunteered alongside her youth minister, Mel, and enjoyed it. In college, she served on staff at a camp and loved it. She shared a story about planning the children's Christmas party as an intern during seminary, "So I remember being excited going out and getting all the stuff and planning it. All together the party was awesome and I remember he (the children's minister) returned that day and said . . . 'this is really good'" (personal communication, September 15, 2015). While the affirmation was important, the energy and enthusiasm Dawn experienced in preparing for this ministry event was even more an affirmation of her gifts and call to ministry. People and doing the work of ministry itself were great affirmations and encouragements to Dawn in exploring, accepting and pursuing her call to the ministry.

Evelyn experienced affirmation of her gifts and call to ministry through doing the job well, but mostly through the encouragement of others. When Evelyn was asked what affirmed her call, she said, “the sense of satisfaction in the, and the sense of being able to do a job well as I worked in churches” (personal communication, October 26, 2015). Evelyn also admitted later, “for me, the positions just came” (personal communication, November 28, 2016). Before Evelyn was a minister, she was a teacher for a few years. She said, “But I was not a good teacher” (personal communication, September 10, 2015). She loved the children and worked hard, but never felt she did a good job. However, in ministry, she excelled and found positions easy, and was therefore encouraged and affirmed. A few years ago, Evelyn was affirmed as she received a reward from a Baptist women’s ministry organization, which she described as “a wonderful thing” (personal communication, November 28, 2016). Evelyn was also affirmed by people in her life, especially her family. Evelyn said,

Um, well the first thing was the um, support and affirmation of my husband and my grown children and even my mother was still alive at the time when I first started working in the church, and she did get—she came one time when I worked at Wellspring Baptist Church and I gave the children’s lessons and gave several prayers and she was proud. And she came from this church that nowadays would not affirm my ministry at all. (personal communication, October 26, 2015)

Evelyn’s husband supported her and affirmed her by encouraging her to go to seminary as an older adult and moving with her as different ministry positions arose. She was affirmed by the other ministers she worked with in churches, and spoke of the influence of these pastors on her call, as shared in an earlier section. Affirmation through success in ministry and through others was important to Evelyn’s continued ministry.

June experienced affirmation in her call to ministry through an energy and love for the work and through people. June experienced a different enthusiasm for ministry than accounting. She said, “Accounting, I could get paid for doing accounting, but that was not something that I loved doing. This (ministry) was something that I loved doing” (personal communication, November 3, 2015). June felt valued and energized when she did the work of ministry, as she shared,

Well initially I just got a lot of energy out of it. So you know when you love something that you are doing you kind of, um, you feel good about it and you just—it doesn’t seem to be overwhelming and so none of it was overwhelming to me. And I just remember walking through the halls of Cross Baptist and I felt energized and I felt good about it—and um, so I think that was kind of affirming. . . . yeah, I think I just had a hard time seeing that I could get paid for something that I enjoyed doing. (personal communication, October 26, 2015)

June experienced affirmation through her love for the work of ministry and through other people. When June was denied the position at Cross Baptist Church, she was encouraged by the dean of the divinity school; “I went to the dean and he said to me, ‘you know personnel committees make mistakes all the time and it should not affect your call to ministry.’ He was so compassionate. He was unreal” (personal communication, September 22, 2015). During this time, her Sunday school class and friends at the church continued to affirm her and encourage her. June received a huge amount of affirmation from her husband, Terry, especially during the divinity school journey. June said,

Yeah, my husband is a man that sees possibilities everywhere and so for him, there wasn’t anything wrong with doing this at all and um, he thought I could handle it. He is very affirming in that and he read every one of my papers, helped me edit them. So he felt like he went to school too . . . So that was fun and we

discussed things and so he felt that he learned along the way as well. He was very supportive. (personal communication, November 3, 2015)

Terry affirmed June through every part of her call and ministry. He encouraged her during the Lay Minister's Ministry, as a volunteer, as an interim, in divinity school, as she searched for a full-time position, and as she served in full-time ministry. The affirmation June received from the ministry work itself and the reassurance of others, encouraged her in her call and desire to serve in professional ministry.

Kim also received affirmation from people and doing the work of ministry. Kim's parents affirmed her calling, especially her dad. Her dad said, "If this is what you feel God is leading you to, you just take the next right step. You don't have to have it all figured out" (personal communication, September 11, 2015). Kim also experienced affirmation from her minister role models. When she shared her thoughts about going into ministry, "Mackenzie, the campus minister, was like, 'I totally see it'" (personal communication, September 11, 2015). Randy, the pastor of the church she attended in college, and Fran, the associate pastor at Bluebird, also encouraged her. Kim also talked about Sharon, an African-American minister she met while serving at Bluebird in her involvement in the state Baptist convention,

I just thought she was so cool! I just thought she was so amazing and she had her hair in braids and I just want to be you, and she was phenomenal and she actually suggested The Divinity School, because all I knew was the Baptist seminaries, because that is where all of my mentors had gone. (personal communication, September 11, 2015)

Sharon affirmed Kim in her ministry and offered different perspectives on seminary options. People affirmed Kim, as well as the ministry work itself. Kim said,

So it was Bluebird and BSU that gave me opportunities to lead and the more that I had those opportunities to try and risk new things; like leading a women's discipleship group, I did that twice, or leading this Bible study, and doing this or that, that you know it was in the stretching my wings to find out, oh wow the Holy Spirit will really work with me doing this and it is not all um, some—there is no mysterious secret. It is just in the doing the thing. (personal communication, September 11, 2015)

She also spoke of her divinity school placements, “That was another huge affirmation of call. Both of my student placements, ‘cause you hear all these nightmare stories about their placements, but both of mine were just ridiculously awesome—total gifts from God” (personal communication, September 11, 2015). Kim admitted among the affirmations and encouragements, there have been plenty of “pokes and prods”; however, she said, “none of the pokes and prods can compare to all of the affirmations” (personal communication, October 16, 2015). While Kim has experienced some discouragement, the affirmations have meant more to her story. Kim's life and call experiences have been full of affirmation from people and by doing the work of ministry.

Each of these women experienced affirmation of their call and ministry. All of them received affirmation from other people. Callie Jean experienced affirmation from personal study, and the other four experienced affirmation from doing the work of ministry well. Even though each call experience was different, affirmation from others seemed to be a common piece for each of these women. Affirmation is an important aspect of call. The call of God is difficult to discern; however, experiencing moments of

affirmation encouraged these women to explore and pursue the call to professional ministry. Baptist churches and individuals can learn from this theme of the importance of verbally affirming others in their gifts and in jobs well done. Churches can also hear again, the importance of giving people the opportunity to serve, because in serving, these women had the ability to find their giftedness and were inspired to pursue and/or continue their passion for professional ministry.

Discouragement

Just as affirmation arose as a common theme in the stories of these Baptist women ministers, unfortunately so did discouragement. Evelyn shared little discouragement, but the other four experienced it at some point. Discouragement did not seem as prevalent as affirmation, but it had an impact on the women's stories.

Although Callie Jean's story was positively impacted by the church, she admitted sometimes the church offered discouragement. When she talked about the church, she said, "Well I get affirmed, um, I also get beat down" (personal communication, September 14, 2015). She shared of parents who questioned her children's ministry methods because she was not a parent, of a time when the church she worked for forced a pastor to resign, and the difficulty she had in supervising another minister. These experiences were difficult and discouraging to Callie Jean as a person of faith and, as a minister, but did not keep her from fulfilling her call.

Dawn first experienced discouragement in college. She said, "I really don't have any stories of anyone saying, 'you shouldn't.' I mean even, I did have some friends in college that I knew were not fans of women in ministry, and especially the pastorate"

(personal communication, October 20, 2015). While she served as an intern at her first church she said, “I had to prove a lot at my first job” (personal communication, October 20, 2015). Even after she was ordained by that church, she struggled with being viewed as a minister and not just as administration staff. These are the only major discouragements Dawn shared as a part of her call and ministry; the affirmations far outweighed the discouragement.

June experienced discouragement from her family and the church. June’s mother discouraged June’s passion for ministry in the beginning June said,

My, when I first decided to go, to do the Lay Minister’s Ministry, my mother thought that I was being stupid. She thought that was something, yeah that, I was not encouraged by her at all. I remember her throwing the book on the floor, and then when I went into divinity school, she was even further against it. I didn’t have support from my family in that sense . . . This was something I had to, um, overcome, her lack of approval and that was a little difficult for me. I discounted it, but it stayed with me, that she did not approve. She has since been grateful and proud of me and all this stuff, but initially the stuff, doesn’t want you to be a children’s minister and your mother is wondering why in the world you are doing this and not going back to accounting and you just wonder. (personal communication, September 22, 2015)

Along with her mother, she received some discouragement from a cousin who had also gone to seminary. When June was going to divinity school and pursuing professional ministry, the cousin asked a lot of questions, and did not even acknowledge June’s ordination or divinity school graduation. June said,

But it was disheartening, not—you know it is not like I have held him in high esteem, but it is like, he has just had the same kind of schooling and that I was going through and so, why wouldn’t you affirm someone, your cousin, why wouldn’t you affirm them pursuing this? He was just too far to the right. (personal communication, November 3, 2015)

While discouragement from family members was hard, June's greatest discouragement came from Cross Baptist Church when she was denied the children's ministry position after serving as the interim. The entire process of applying and being denied by the personnel committee had a huge impact on June. She shared, "That initial calling, I felt that wasn't affirmed . . . As I pursued it and as I was ordained, I certainly was welcomed when they ordained me. I felt like they made a turn or maybe I just stayed long enough that they saw me differently" (personal communication, November 3, 2015). While not getting the position was discouraging to June and led her to questioning her call, eventually the church ordained her as a Deacon, and later ordained her as a minister. Discouragement from her family and the church was painful for June and led to some doubt about her call, but she did not let that discouragement keep her from pursuing her call to the ministry.

Kim also faced discouragement in her journey. Her major discouragements came from friends. Kim was in college when she began to explore a call to ministry. At the time, she was dating a conservative guy she met in the college ministry. She said, "I was still so confused and it did not help to have the guy I was madly in love with tell me what I really needed to do was join a women's year-long intensive Bible study, because I just kept saying, 'I just want to know more. I want to study this'" (personal communication, September 11, 2015). In college, there were other discouraging voices, including those who asked, "Well, what are going to do with it? I mean you can go to seminary and you can go to divinity school, but what are you going to do with that? And of course, the answer needed to be, 'well I am going to be a missionary'" (personal communication,

October 16, 2015). Kim also received discouragement from friends in college, including one friend who, after college, invited Kim to sing at her wedding, but refused to put “Reverend” in front of Kim’s name in the program. This impacted Kim more than she expected, as she said, “so, that was painful because she had been, we had been through the trenches of student teaching together and we had really been good friends, and that was painful discouragement, and it was because I had become a woman minister” (personal communication, October 16, 2015). Losing friends based on her call was a painful discouragement and reality for Kim to face, “that I will be rejected simply because I am following what God wants me to do” (personal communication, October 16, 2015). As Kim reflected on these discouraging moments, she was disheartened because “these people still would not be supportive of me” (personal communication, July 14, 2016). While these people discouraged Kim from pursuing her calling, Kim also pointed out the need to “value the painful parts and put them in perspective that um, I do need to go back and remember that was really hard, and I was braver than I thought” (personal communication, July 14, 2016). Kim experienced discouragement from people whom she considered friends. While the discouragement was painful, Kim continued to pursue ministry because the affirmation was bigger than the discouragement and came to see value in these painful instances.

Discouragement was a theme in the stories of these Baptist women ministers. Ironically, this theme was not as prominent as I assumed it would be. Most of the discouragement came from people and relationships, and not the larger Baptist narrative of discouraging women in ministerial roles. The discouragement was painful and

impactful, but did not deter these women from doing what they felt God had called them to do. Baptist individuals and churches may need to realize discouragement of women in ministry still occurs. Stories of these instances of discouragement need to be shared for Baptist churches and individuals to realize the difficulties Baptist women in ministry face, simply based on their gender. The theme of discouragement also teaches us that the impact of our words and actions can be larger than we think or imagine, for better or worse.

Personal Doubt and Fear

A major theme that occurred in all stories was that of feelings of doubt and fear. Each woman struggled with and questioned her call. Many also expressed fear in pursuing new ministry opportunities.

Callie Jean experienced doubt and fear when approaching new ministry opportunities. When she talked about leaving for her first summer missions appointment she said, “But I remember leaving and being scared” (personal communication, September 14, 2015). She had thought about applying for a foreign appointment, but didn’t want to ride a plane, so applied for a home mission appointment, and still ended up having to ride a plane. When Callie began to feel led to seminary and professional ministry, she struggled. She said,

So, when I felt led in this way, I really questioned a lot. I can remember a lot of prayer. I remember going through different books I had done . . . I was like, “really God? This is kind of, I don’t think I am your person. Like Moses . . . and I don’t talk well . . . you are going to have to send someone to talk for me.” Although I don’t remember asking for that, but I do remember going . . . “I don’t, How am I going to articulate?” And all I knew was that I knew children well. I felt competent in teaching school. I wasn’t sure what I knew about, theology-

wise, that I could transfer over . . . So, um I did not want to do it and I can't, I wasn't resistant. Um, but like everything else, there is only so much you can resist if God is really in it. (personal communication, October 27, 2015)

As Callie Jean approached her first professional ministry job she shared, "So, um, I am thinking, I don't even know if I can do this job! I do know that I have a heart for children. I do know that I have led a class and teach certain things" (personal communication, September 14, 2015). Callie Jean doubted and questioned God's call. She feared public speaking and questioned if she could do ministry. These doubts and fears were a theme in her story, but obviously not the final word.

Dawn's story also includes feelings of doubt. As Dawn began to experience a call, she questioned going to seminary. Her sophomore year of college she began thinking, "I might go to seminary. Maybe I will go to seminary," but struggled to commit because she doubted if she was really called to ministry (personal communication, September 15, 2015). After accepting the call to ministry and being hired as an intern, she doubted her abilities; ". . . I remember driving one of those, one of my first days to my first job thinking, I am responsible for the spiritual formation of children. I could screw them up" (personal communication, October 20, 2015)! Later, Dawn experienced doubt during a rough season of searching for a new church position. She said, "So, that was probably the one point where I really kind of wondered if I was hearing this . . . Because up 'til then, I had been fairly confident, once I accepted the call, yeah, I am called to this" (personal communication, September 15, 2015). Dawn's confidence faded as the search for a ministry position became difficult. Dawn also struggled with doubt, as people affirmed her specifically for the ministry of a senior

pastorate. When a friend encouraged her to explore the idea of being a senior pastor, Dawn responded with, “Can we just, like, calm down for a minute?” (personal communication, September 15, 2015). When Dawn was asked about her ultimate calling she responded, “Might be the pastorate, which is scary to think about, but that might be it. Not sure, I don’t know” (personal communication, October 20, 2015). Adding to this doubt concerning the opportunity to serve as a senior pastor one day, Dawn’s most recent feelings of doubt and fear were brought about due to a health diagnosis. Before the research process, Dawn experienced some health concerns. During the research, she was diagnosed with endometriosis and has had some feelings of doubt and fear in relation to that diagnosis. She shared, “Just trying to figure out, stressful job, stressful medical condition at times, if I put the two together, what does that mean for me and my health” (personal communication, November 21, 2016)? Dawn said, “being on a church staff with multiple people, I can say, ‘hey, I need to disappear for the day, just having a bad day,’ but you know, are all churches as willing to work with that” (personal communication, November 21, 2016)? This new health diagnosis opened Dawn’s story to more doubts in relation to a senior pastorate position and future ministry positions in general. Dawn doubted her initial call, then pursued it diligently. More doubts arose as she had a difficult time finding a ministry position, now more doubts and fears existed due her health. Though these doubts were a part of Dawn’s story, they did not take away from the abundant affirmations and personal desire to fulfill her call to ministry.

In the beginning, Evelyn’s doubt centered around her ability to minister, and later that she would ever be a senior pastor. Before Evelyn even entered divinity school, she

was approached by Wellspring Baptist church to serve as the minister of education.

Evelyn responded to the pastor saying, “‘You are crazy. There are 25 Ph.D.’s in that church, they are all educated, I don’t have a Master’s degree in theology or Christian education, that is silly,’ and so he said, ‘would you do it’” (personal communication, September 10, 2015)? Even though she doubted her ability to minister, especially in such an educated setting, she did take the job and worked at Wellspring for seven years.

While working at Wellspring, Evelyn entered seminary. During seminary, she doubted if she would get another job, she said; “we may have gone through this and I may never get a job” (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Before Evelyn graduated, she had a job offer at Norwood Baptist Church. When Evelyn decided to apply for a position at First Baptist Village, doubt arose again, this time in relation to her age, as she said, “. . . they are not going to call me anyway, I am a grandmother” (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Even after such doubt, Evelyn was called to First Baptist Village as an associate minister. As she prepared to move to First Baptist Village, she did “with a very heavy heart, thinking I would never be a pastor” (personal communication, September 10, 2015). Evelyn served at First Baptist Village and got to preach there once a month. Soon she was given the opportunity to pastor a church start. Evelyn experienced doubt as she looked ahead to future ministry positions; however, following each experience with doubt, she was given an opportunity. When she reflected on her journey, she even shared that ministry positions came easy.

June’s doubt in relation to her call to ministry was largely based on her professional identity as an accountant and on her one experience of being denied a

ministry position at a church. When June shared her first reactions to experiencing a call, she said, “Well my first thought is, I am an accountant” (personal communication, November 3, 2016). While her reaction was to doubt her calling, June continued to explore and pursue the calling. June also faced doubt when Cross Baptist chose not to hire her for the children’s ministry position. She thought, “This church does not affirm me, then what” (personal communication, November 3, 2015)? That act of discouragement brought on all kinds of doubts and fears for June. However, June eventually realized, “But it wasn’t about that church affirming me, it was God affirming me” (personal communication, November 3, 2015). June’s doubts were real, but small compared to her internal desire, affirmation, and call to professional ministry.

Out of all the women interviewed, Kim struggled the most with feelings of doubt and fear. Much of this fear came from, “that desperate sense of that fear, of you know, resistance—other people saying, ‘No, no, no, you can’t do that’” (personal communication, October 16, 2015). Kim feared rejection from others. She also feared, “going against the norm” (personal communication, October 16, 2015). She feared the reactions of some of her extended family members, whom she knew did not approve of women in ministry. Kim also feared not being able to get a job, sharing, “. . . what if I pursue this and then nothing opens. Like I pursue this and I can’t get a job. I can’t do anything” (personal communication, October 16, 2015). Kim admitted some of those fears came from not having a model of a woman minister: “I was not prepared for it. I didn’t have those models. I hadn’t grown up with that” (personal communication, October 16, 2015). Though Kim pursued theological education and a professional career

in ministry, these fears did not go away completely. In divinity school, she struggled to find her voice. She even admitted,

I put off preaching, because I was scared of it. I didn't take it, you are supposed to take it your second year and I took it my third year, because I was afraid of it and I wasn't sure what I was going to do. And I think I knew that I was called to preaching . . . It was going to be a part of my story and I didn't want it to be because it put me into a whole other category of acceptability and futility. (personal communication, October 16, 2015)

Therefore, those opportunities to serve were important for Kim; they gave her the space and chance to face those fears in the safety of affirming places. Kim continued to struggle with feelings and doubt and fear, especially in her family's most recent move to a different place and ministry positions. She said, "But sometimes you know, in this process, my heart is just clinched with like, oh my gosh, what if I am completely crazy, and this isn't what God is unfolding and we are uprooting our family, so I can have a place to serve too" (personal communication, July 14, 2016). Even though Kim had the opportunity to look back on her story and see where her doubts and fears were taken care of, she continued to struggle with the doubts and fears associated with discerning God's call.

Feelings of doubt and fear were real in the stories and lives of these Baptist women ministers. Some of those doubts and fears were founded in a lack of confidence for doing the sacred task of ministry or fear of the future consequences of pursuing professional ministry for themselves, their careers, and their families. The existence of these feelings of doubt and fear makes the existence of the theme of affirmation even more important. The affirmations outweighed the discouragements and feelings of doubt

and fear, and these women continued to pursue and serve in professional ministry. Baptist individuals and churches can learn how to better nurture women called to ministry, from a better understanding of the doubts and fears of women called to ministry, from a better understanding of the doubts and fears of these women.

Other Minor Themes

The previous eight major themes emerged during the analysis of the stories of the five Baptist women; however, some smaller themes also emerged in multiple stories. These themes included music, preaching, questioning theology, local church dysfunction, and the value of hard work. Music was a part of every woman's story. All the women had experiences with either singing and/or playing the piano or organ. While music was a part of their stories, it did not surface as an integral part, even though music allowed for them to serve within the church context. It is important to note that before women were given more opportunities to serve, music was a safe and acceptable place for Southern Baptist women to serve within the church. The theme of preaching surfaced a few times throughout the stories. Evelyn and Kim had the most experience with preaching, since Evelyn served as a senior pastor and Kim served as an interim, both positions in which they were responsible for preaching every week. Dawn and June expressed a desire to preach more often; both have even pondered the idea of becoming senior pastors. It is important to note that preaching was viewed as the most controversial place for women to serve within the Southern Baptist tradition. Four out of the five women shared instances where they questioned the theology they were taught, most of those instances occurring at a young age. While those instances of questioning were small in the large realm of their

stories, they showed a level of theological thinking, a skill used in ministry daily. Three out of the five women also shared stories of local church dysfunction or hurt. For two of these women, church dysfunction and hurt seemed to have a larger impact on their stories and ministries; however, the dysfunction and hurt did not take away from their love for the church or want to pursue professional ministry. Finally, the value of hard work emerged as a minor theme in the narratives. This theme was not explicitly stated, but it was obvious these women were willing to give their all to accomplish their goals, especially with family, education, and professional ministry. Very little seemed to be handed to these women; instead, they achieved their goals and success in life and ministry because they worked hard. These minor themes were part of the narratives, but did not seem to have as much influence as the major themes explored above.

Conclusion of Themes

Eight major themes and a few smaller themes emerged after analyzing the narratives of these five Baptist women ministers. Family, early church involvement, service, ministerial role models, education, affirmation, discouragement, and doubt were clear patterns seen throughout the narratives. These were not the only themes found in these stories; however, they are the ones that stood out the most during the analysis. I do not claim these patterns emerge in all stories of Baptist women ministers, but they do allow a snapshot into the lives of these specific Baptist women ministers, especially in relation to their call experiences. Reflecting on themes allows a deeper understanding of the lives of these Baptist women ministers. The themes allow me to see what was important to these women as they experienced, explored, responded to, and pursued their

calls to ministry. The themes also allow us to notice the aspects, people, and experience which nurtured their call. These themes can help Baptist lay-people, Baptist ministers, and Baptist churches to better understand the lives of Baptist women ministers and better understand how to create an atmosphere that cultivates and nurtures God's call on the lives of God's people, especially women, who were denied the ministerial calling in Baptist tradition for so long. More specific applications of the themes are covered in Chapter V.

Silences and Selectivities

Though these stories allowed us to explore the lives and calling experiences of these women, silences and selectivities did exist in relation to baptism and profession of faith, children, ordination, the Southern Baptist controversy, and gender bias. One major silence or selectivity that existed was the lack of information shared about their baptisms, professions of faith, and communication with God concerning their call. Only two of the women mentioned their baptism, and these instances were in passing while sharing other parts of their stories. All the women mentioned their professions of faith, but only Callie Jean went into great detail. The evidence of this silence and selectivity was surprising to me as a Baptist, because these two faith markers are so emphasized in the Baptist church and tradition. In relation to this silence, was the absence experiences of direct communication with God about their call experiences. The call experiences of these women differ from the traditional Biblical examples of call involving the audible voice of God. Their experiences reflect a more contemporary reflection of call, one similar to Parker Palmer's idea of vocation, as mentioned in Chapter I. This silence points to the

evolving understanding of call and the importance of individuals and the church in nurturing the call of God in others.

Another silence or selectivity was the lack of information shared about their children. First, it must be stated that only three out of the five women have children. While family was a major theme for the narratives overall, the women with children mentioned their children very little. A few stories were shared and some concern was raised about the effects of ministry on their children, but little detail and few stories were shared in relation to the parent/child relationship. More was shared in relation to the influence of their parents and husbands. This selectivity pushes for more research around ministry and family.

Another selectivity was the lack of discussion around their ordination experience. Ordination is the setting apart of people for a specific and holy task, in this instance professional ministry. Only two of the women mentioned their ordinations in the telling of their stories. Only when asked in the second interview did each woman talk about her ordination experience. For all the women, the ordination experience was meaningful, but was not discussed in the initial telling of their stories. This was surprising because the ordination of women has been a point of controversy within Southern Baptist tradition; and because ordination into the gospel ministry is a sacred and special celebration, it would be assumed this event would be a larger part of their stories.

This selectivity led to the uncovering of two others—the lack of discussion of the Southern Baptist Convention controversy concerning women, and the lack of experience with gender bias. Callie Jean was the only woman to go into detail about the controversy,

mostly because the controversy affected her father and she was in seminary during the height of the schism. The controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention in relation to women in ministry seemed to have very little impact on the narratives of these women. Another silence and selectivity was the lack of discussion on gender bias. Callie Jean shared the experience where her partner in her summer mission assignment was oppressed by the pastor. Dawn alluded to the fact that her role as a children's minister is often considered acceptable in the eyes of even those who oppose women ministers. Evelyn and June noted the difference in pay for men and women ministers. These instances were small within the context of the stories shared around other themes. Kim shared the most about experiencing gender bias, sharing instances in college, divinity school, and ministry. While these women did not share a lot about the existence of gender bias, this silence or selectivity, may reflect of the religious system in which they were raised and formed. Their lack of experience with gender bias does not mean it does not exist. However, it can mean these women are blind to bias that exists because of their tradition or they have intentionally chosen to be blind to the bias that exists to pursue their call. While it is surprising the SBC oppression and gender bias did not play a more prevalent role, it is also important to understand that, while these women had experience in the Southern Baptist tradition, as adults and ministers they chose to align with more progressive churches who affirm women in ministry. The lack of discussion around the controversy gives hope that progress is being made to move beyond the controversy. The lack of discussion around gender bias points to a need for understanding the reality of gender bias and how Baptist women ministers and church approach such bias.

Because narrative inquiry was based on the stories shared by the research participants, it was difficult to process the major themes as well as the silences and selectivities. It was hard to include the entirety of life experience in a few interviews. Some of these silences and selectivities could simply be because these themes were not important to the larger story, while others could be because the focus of the research was specific to the call to ministry. Silences and selectivities, though hard to process, can often be as important as the major themes to help determine where future research needs to be focused. Some of these silences and selectivities are further explored in Chapter V in relation to further research.

Conclusion

The stories of Callie Jean, Dawn, Evelyn, June, and Kim allowed an exploration into the lives and call experiences of Baptist women ministers. Their stories were shared, recorded, studied, and analyzed. While each of their stories is sacred and personal, narrative research seeks to find common themes in relation to the research questions. Through the research methods, eight major themes emerged: family, early church involvement, Christian service, ministerial role models, education, affirmation, discouragement, and personal doubt. Minor themes also emerged in relation to music, preaching, questioning theology, local church dysfunction, and the value of hard work. Also, several silences and selectivities were discovered including; baptism and profession of faith, children, ordination, the Southern Baptist controversy, and gender bias. This analysis responds to the central research questions of how Baptist women experience the call to ministry, how Baptist women respond to the call, and how Baptist individuals and

churches can nurture those Baptist women called to ministry. More detail in relation to these conclusions, practical implications, and future research are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Understanding the call experiences of Baptist women ministers has been a worthwhile process of exploring call, Southern Baptist history, and personal stories. In this chapter I conclude by focusing on the narratives within their historical context; I concentrate on answering the research questions; I give examples of practical implications from the research questions; and I focus on areas of future research in relation to this study.

All Christians are called to follow Christ, grow as disciples, and use their gifts to minister in the world. For some, that call is a call to professional ministry. While biblical and historical examples of the call experiences of women are few in comparison to those of men, this is a result of the patriarchal system that exists within the Christian tradition. My Christian framework leads me to embody a belief that God is active in the world and in the lives of people. My Baptist framework grants me the freedom to examine and interpret God's call. My Feminist Theology framework allows me to embrace the belief that women are called by God and that their stories matter.

Narratives in Context

It is important to understand the personal narratives in their historical context. A timeline, including dates from Southern Baptist history, dates from the feminist movement, and the important dates in the lives of the women, is included below.

Table 1

Historical Context Timeline

Date	Event
1638	Roger Williams founded the First Baptist Church in Rhode Island
1814	Triennial Convention formed
1840s-1920s	First Wave of feminism
1845	Southern Baptist Convention formed
1849	Harriet A. Butler becomes first single female missionary appointed by SBC
1888	Women's Missionary Union formed
1895	<i>Woman's Bible</i> published by Elizabeth Cady Stanton
1901	Women allowed to take seats at the SBC Annual Meeting
1916	First woman speaks at SBC Annual Meeting
1918	Southern Baptist women allowed to serve as messengers at SBC Annual Meeting
1920	Nineteenth Amendment gives women the right to vote
1937	Evelyn is born
1955-1958	Evelyn in college
1956	June is born
1960s	Women's Liberation Movement begins
1960	Callie Jean is born
1963	<i>The Feminine Mystique</i> published by Betty Friedan
1964	Addie Davis, first woman minister ordained by a Southern Baptist church
1970s	Women begin to hold SBC state and national offices
1971	Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Reuther present papers at the American Academy of Religion
1972	Kim is born
1974	SBC holds first official seminar focused on the role of women
1974-1978	June in college
1978-1982	Callie Jean in college
1986	Evelyn's first ministry position
1986	Callie Jean's first ministry position
1985	Dawn is born
1985-1987	Callie Jean in seminary
1987	Southern Baptist Alliance formed
1990-1993	Evelyn in seminary
1990-1994	Kim in college
1991	Cooperative Baptist Alliance formed
1993	Evelyn is ordained
1994-1997	Kim in seminary

Table 1

Cont.

Date	Event
1996	Callie Jean is ordained
1997	Kim is ordained
1998	<i>Baptist Faith and Message</i> changed to include a submission statement (women should submit to their husbands)
2000	Kim's first ministry position CPE residency
2000	<i>Baptist Faith and Message</i> changed to include a statement saying women should not be ordained
2001	June's first ministry position
2002-2007	June in seminary
2003-2007	Dawn in college
2007-2011	Dawn in seminary
2007	Dawn's first ministry position
2010	Dawn is ordained

Note. Blue=Baptist; Red=Feminism; Purple=Evelyn; Grey=June; Brown=Callie Jean; Yellow=Kim; Green=Dawn

There were variances between the different generations of women that reflect the history of their context. The women of the older generation mentioned Southern Baptist programs more often, focused less on their childhoods, and entered the ministry as a second career. The older generation was more influenced by traditional Southern Baptist programs, especially mission programs such as GAs and Acteens. During their childhood, these programs were prominent in most Southern Baptist churches, and were obviously influential. However, this generation focused less on their childhood experiences. This could be because their childhoods are farther away, but could also be because their calls are formed more in adulthood than childhood, as they begin to sense the effects of the second wave of feminism. Professional ministry was not an option for women when these women were children; therefore, they would not have seen it as an

option during their childhood. Finally, women of the older generation entered ministry as a second career. This is in relation to the effects of the Women's Liberation Movement on the church. At the time of their college education and career choices, ministry was less of an option for women than for the younger generation. Baptist were behind other denominations in change as a result of the Women's Liberation Movement. However, even Baptist women began to see more career options, including professional ministry. As the climate of society and Baptist life changed, the lives of women changed, including the women in this study. These women lived **during** the Women's Liberation Movement and the great controversy of the Southern Baptist Convention. Their lives and call experiences reflected their time in history.

The women of the younger generation focused more on their childhoods, were impacted by college ministries, and shared more about relationships than programs. The younger generation shared more of their childhood experiences. This could be because they were less removed from those memories, or because their calls were formed more in childhood than the older generation. As young children, they most likely saw women in more diverse careers and more women in church leadership than the older generation. Therefore, they would have seen more possibilities for career options, including ministry. Involvement in college ministry was important to the women of the younger generation. Service and growth in college was extremely formative. However, at this time in history, college had become a time of exploration and growth, not just academic education. With the more career opportunities, came more opportunities in education. Also, with the dissention in Southern Baptist life came more opportunities for women within new

progressive Baptist organizations. The younger generation also focused more on relationships and less on programming. During their lives the structure of the Southern Baptist Convention was much different; the controversy had taken its toll. As new Baptist organizations formed, many duly aligned churches and churches that completely separated from the SBC, found new programs and ways to disciple and teach to disassociate with the conservative programs of the SBC. During this time, building relationships became an important way to disciple. The younger generation women lived **after** the Women's Liberation Movement and the great controversy of the SBC. Their lives and call experiences reflected living after these events in history. This generation reaped the benefits of the Women's Liberation Movement and moderate Baptist thought and practice much earlier in life.

There were differences within the personal narratives in relation to history and context. The older generation women were more affected by the unrest of the Southern Baptist Convention and experienced the personal effects of the Women's Liberation Movement later in life. The younger generation women were more affected by the consequences of Southern Baptist Convention controversy, including a focus on Baptist freedoms and the forming of new Baptist organizations, and experienced the personal effects of the Women's Liberation Movement and the opportunities, including a wider range of education and career opportunities, it provided earlier in life. While the impact of the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention around women's roles and the Women's Liberation Movement was not overtly stated in the narratives, an examination

of dates in relation to Southern Baptist history, feminism and the personal narratives showed the lives of these women were influenced by their context.

Central Research Questions

My research was guided by three central research questions. First, how do Baptist women experience a call to ministry? Second, how do Baptist women respond to the call to ministry? Lastly, how can Baptist churches and individuals help nurture and encourage women ministers in accepting and responding to their calling? I identified eight major themes that helped answer these research questions: family, early church involvement, Christian service, ministerial role models, education, affirmation, discouragement, and personal doubt.

How Do Baptist Women Experience a Call to Ministry?

The call experiences of these women were personal and special. Each woman experienced a call to ministry differently. However, there were similarities in their experiences. These Baptist women ministers experienced a call to ministry within the Christian faith and community, through opportunities to serve, a feeling or nudging, and affirmation from others.

Christian faith and community. Family and early church involvement were important themes gathered from the participants' narratives. Each participant was introduced to the Christian faith through her family. Each participant was involved in a community of faith as a young child. Callie Jean was the daughter of a preacher and her family life centered around church. Dawn was introduced to the faith through her mother and her mother involved her in the work of the church at a young age. Evelyn was

introduced to the faith and church life by her mother and father. June learned of the importance of faith from her paternal grandmother and was introduced to church life by her mother. Kim was introduced to faith and church by her mother, father, and extended family. These women experienced the call to ministry within the Christian faith and church context. They were familiar with the faith language and ideals. They were familiar with the structure of the church as a Christian community and the existence of professional ministers. Experience within the realm of Christian community led by professional ministers gave each woman the background for understanding church structure and professional ministry. Each woman experienced the call while a part of the Christian faith and Christian community. Each woman experienced the call through the embodiment of the Christian faith and participation within church culture.

Christian service. Christian service was a major theme throughout the stories. All the women had opportunities to serve, within the church and/or with other Christians organizations, before experiencing a call to ministry and serving in professional ministry. Callie Jean taught within the church, worked at a summer camp, and served as a summer missionary. Dawn served alongside her mother in the nursery, worked alongside her youth minister, served on a summer camp staff, and served as a summer missionary. Evelyn played the organ, taught Sunday school, and helped her dad with training programs. June played the piano, led a children's choir, served in a lay minister's ministry, taught Sunday School, and led other children's ministries. Kim helped plan and lead worship, led Bible studies and discipleship groups, and served as a summer missionary. Dawn, Kim, and June all used the language of "doors opening" for service

opportunities in relation to their call journey. The open doors to service and ministry opportunities helped propel these women towards embracing their call and pursuing professional ministry. Christian service opportunities gave these women the ability to use their gifts for ministry and learn through the doing of ministry. These women experienced a call to ministry by actively serving and being involved in ministry work.

Feeling or nudging. Not one of these women shared a one-time call experience. As Dawn said, “I don’t have a big dramatic story; it just kind of happened” (October 20, 2015). Instead, their call experiences were sets of events and feelings that nudged them to explore professional ministry. When Callie Jean talked about making the decision to go to seminary she said, “So I guess it was a nudging” (personal communication, September 14, 2015). She also said, “I think that I was called . . . That I really felt that God felt like I could do this . . .” (personal communication, October 27, 2015). Evelyn referred to a feeling “way down inside” when she talked about her call and passion for preaching (personal communication, September 10, 2015). June shared she “started getting a little nudging from God” as she worked with the children’s ministry of her church (personal communication, September 22, 2015). Kim said she experienced “feeling a pull towards all that (ministry),” and she “felt more alive” doing ministry service than anything else (personal communication, October 16, 2015 and personal communication, September 11, 2015). Not one of these women had a road to Damascus experience, like Paul, or a PSAT experience, like me. It is important to remember these feelings did not come out of context. When these women experienced the call to ministry, they had a personal relationship with God and were serving within the local

church. Therefore, these feelings were not just simple emotions, but interpreted to be the work of the Holy Spirit moving in the lives of these women. These women experienced a call to ministry through their feelings and nudging from God to do the work of ministry.

Affirmation. Finally, these women experienced the call to ministry through affirmation. Affirmation was a major theme throughout the stories of these Baptist women in ministry. Callie Jean experienced affirmation through excelling in ministry service, through theological education, in overcoming a stutter, from her dad, from co-workers, and the church. Dawn was affirmed through doing ministry service well and enjoying it, ministerial role models, and friends and family. Evelyn was affirmed by ministry success, family, fellow ministers, and the ease of finding professional ministry opportunities. June experienced affirmation through her love and energy for ministry, people trusting her, theological education, and friends and family. Kim was affirmed by ministry role models, service, churches, and family. While the call was personal for each of these women, each woman experienced the call through affirmation. Most of these affirmations came from success in doing the work of ministry and through people. These women experienced a call to ministry through affirmation of their gifts and passions for ministry.

Experiencing call. The Baptist women ministers in this study experienced a call to ministry. This experience was not a one-time event, but a series of events, feelings, and opportunities that pushed these women to explore and pursue their call to professional ministry. They experienced a call to ministry within the Christian faith and Christian community and through service, personal feelings, and affirmation. All of their

experiences had one major theme in common. Each woman believed her call to professional ministry came from God. Understanding these facets of the call experience helped to better identify how Baptist churches and individuals can better nurture that experience.

How Do Baptist Women Respond to the Call to Ministry?

An important aspect of the call experience is response. Response to God's call to ministry can be varied; however, there were patterns that arose from the responses of the five women in this study. The Baptist women ministers responded to the call to ministry with by doubting, by consulting with family and ministerial mentors, and by seeking theological education.

Doubt. The first response to the call for of these women was doubt. Callie Jean shared, "So when I felt led in this way, I really questioned a lot" (personal communication, October 27, 2015). Callie Jean doubted if her education and experience in teaching would transfer to the realm of ministry. Dawn also questioned her call to ministry. When asked about her reaction when she first thought of ministry as a career she said, "Are you sure about me" (personal communication, October 20, 2015)? Though Dawn knew women could be ministers, she doubted she would ever be one. Evelyn's call evolved from opportunities to serve in professional ministry. After her first job, Evelyn was asked by another church to serve and she responded with, "You are crazy" (personal communication, September 10, 2015)? Even after serving in professional ministry, Evelyn still responded with doubt and questioning in response to God's continual call to professional ministry. June said, "Well my first thought is, I am an

accountant . . .” (personal communication, November 3, 2015). June’s first response was to question because of her background and previous career in accounting. When asked about her response when experiencing a call to ministry Kim responded, “I was panicked! Because like I said, this started happening in college and I was not, I was not prepared for it. I didn’t have those models, I hadn’t grown up with that” (personal communication, October 16, 2016). Kim’s doubt was based on the lack of woman minister models as a child. Each of these women first responded to their call experience with doubt and questioning.

Consulting family members and ministerial role models. While doubt was the first response, these women were not deterred in exploring and pursuing the call to ministry. After their initial personal feelings and questions of doubt, these women responded by seeking counsel from others. Callie Jean talked with her Master Life group and her father about her call. The Master Life class was formative for Callie Jean’s call, so it made sense for her to share and explore her call in the comfort of that group. She also talked with her dad, because he had experienced a call to ministry himself. She said, “he had good insight” (personal communication, October 27, 2015). Dawn talked with her pastor at a Chipotle as she explored her call and looked into seminary. Evelyn said, “The only person that I really shared that with was my husband” (personal communication, October 26, 2015). Evelyn’s husband encouraged Evelyn in her pursuit of a ministry career. June also approached her husband and was supported; however, she wasn’t as supported by her mother. She shared, “I shared it with my mother and she was dead set against it” (personal communication, November 3, 2015). Kim approached her

ministerial role models. They affirmed her gifts for ministry and helped her consider divinity schools. When these women experienced a call to ministry, they doubted and then reached out to people for counsel and affirmation. For the majority, they were affirmed and encouraged to pursue the call to professional ministry.

Pursuing theological education. Finally, all the women responded by pursuing theological education. Education was important to all five women. Dawn and Kim began to experience their call to professional ministry in college and responded by going directly from college to seminary. Dawn and Kim were greatly impacted by campus ministry organizations in college. While neither entered college with the goal of pursuing professional ministry, as their calls unfolded throughout their college experiences, they each decided to pursue professional ministry through theological education. Callie Jean, Evelyn, and June experienced their feelings for a call to professional ministry after college and their first careers. Following their feelings of call, they all explored theological education opportunities and enrolled in a master's level divinity program. When Callie Jean first enrolled in seminary classes, it was simply to obtain enough credits to qualify as a foreign missionary. However, she changed her mind as her call evolved; she resigned from her teaching job, and enrolled fulltime. Evelyn and June experienced a call to ministry much later in life, but still responded the same. Each pursued theological education and flourished in that setting. The right to education for women was fought for by the women of the first feminist movement. Since then education has been an important avenue for women to achieve professional success. Based on this understanding, it is not a coincidence that these five women responded to

their call by pursuing theological education. Theological education provided opportunities to learn, grow, practice, and prepare for professional ministry.

Responding to the call. Biblical, historical, and personal understandings of call support the need for a response. The five women in this study responded to their call by doubting, by seeking advice and affirmation, and by pursuing theological education.

While their first response was doubt, this doubt did not deter the women from exploring and pursuing the call to ministry. These responses help identify areas in which Baptist individuals and churches can affirm and support the call experience.

How Can Baptist Individuals and Churches Help Nurture and Encourage Women Ministers in Accepting and Responding to Their Calling?

The final research question points to the practical piece of this research. Based on my insight from analysis and reflection on the previous research questions, I better understand how Baptist women experience and respond to a call to ministry. This understanding helps in recognizing how Baptist individuals and churches can help nurture and encourage women in their call to ministry. Major ways Baptist individuals and churches can nurture women in their call experiences include: creating safe and welcoming communities of faith; encouraging women to serve and lead in all areas of ministry; making women ministers and leaders visible; recognizing women doing ministry and offering affirmation; and sharing stories of women and call experiences. More detailed practical implications from the research are shared in a later section.

Creating safe and welcoming communities of faith. Nurturing the call experiences of women called to ministry begins before women fully recognize or respond

to the call. The women involved in the study had experiences with faith, Christian community, and ministry as young children. Their introduction to faith and church life was influential. Baptist individuals and churches need to understand the impact they have on the faith of others, especially children. Three of the five women had negative experiences with the church when they were young. Dawn described her church as dysfunctional. June shared the struggle of being in a church where she didn't feel comfortable asking faith questions. Kim shared the negative influences of an unwelcoming church environment and ministers who focused mostly on the wrath of God. These experiences impacted the faith of these women. Baptist individuals and churches need to do a better job of evaluating what they are teaching and saying about God and the Christian faith through their words, actions, attitudes, and environments. Churches need to ask questions such as: "What are we teaching our children? How are we representing God through our business, programs, leaders, and faith practices?" Churches and individuals need to acknowledge the role they play in forming the faith of others, especially children, and work to create safe and welcoming spaces for children, youth, and adults to navigate and form their faith.

Encouraging women to serve. In order to nurture the call experiences of women called to professional ministry, women need to be given opportunities to serve in all aspects of church work and Christian service. Service was a major theme in the stories and a specific way the Baptist women experienced their call to ministry. Baptist individuals and churches need to do a better job of asking gifted and called women to serve. Women exploring the call to ministry need to be given opportunities to preach,

teach, and lead. This may mean other individuals must sacrifice their places of service to allow for others to learn and grow in their calling. Churches need to be willing to open these opportunities to women so they can experience all areas of service and explore their gifts and calls. Even women not called to professional ministry can benefit from serving.

Make women visible. To nurture the call experiences of Baptist women, Baptist churches need to make women ministers visible in their congregations. Only two out of the five women saw a Baptist woman minister before their college or adult years. Granted, some of this has changed; due to the growing support for women in ministry, more women ministers are serving in local churches. However, women are still a minority. That minority needs to be seen by people in the pews, especially women and girls. That minority also needs to be seen by those who oppose or ignore women ministers to normalize women ministers within the church context. Churches need to encourage women ministers to serve in the pulpit, to lead business meetings, to teach people of all ages, and to perform sacred acts such as communion, baptisms, and baby dedications. This also means more churches need to consider hiring women ministers for all roles, including the senior pastorate. Women ministers need to be seen so women and girls know professional ministry is a possibility.

Recognize and affirm women. Baptist churches and individuals need to recognize women doing ministry and affirm them. Too often church work and ministry switches to autopilot. Things get done and people go unnoticed. Baptist churches and individuals need to be mindful of the work being done and who it is being done by. When a woman serves as a Sunday school teacher and does a great job, she needs to be

told. When a woman prepares, and leads a Bible study or discipleship group and excels, she needs to be affirmed. When a woman shows compassion to a grieving family or a sick person in need, she needs to be affirmed in her gifts. Affirmation can only happen if Baptist individuals and churches are intentional about paying attention to those serving. Affirmation was an important theme throughout the stories. Affirmation needs to happen for women to experience and respond to the call to professional ministry. Even if a person is not called to professional ministry, affirmation is still an important aspect of spiritual giftedness and Christian service.

Share stories. Finally, Baptist individuals and churches need to share stories of call. Baptist women ministers within churches need to be willing to share their stories of call and churches need to offer the time and space to do so. Baptist individuals and churches need to talk about call. The call of God should not be a foreign concept to Baptist people. Personal stories help people reflect, relate, learn and grow. The stories of the Bible are how we teach children and adults about the Bible. In the same way, the stories of Baptist women ministers can be used to teach others about God's call and the responsibility to respond. Baptist individuals and churches need to allow for conversation about God's call and space for stories to be shared and explored.

Baptist individuals and churches play a part in the nurturing of call. These Baptist women ministers experienced a call to ministry within the Christian faith and community, through opportunities to serve, a feeling or nudging, and affirmation from others. They responded to the call to ministry with by doubting, by consulting family and ministerial role models, and by pursuing theological education. Based on the answers to

the first two research questions, Baptist individuals and churches can nurture the call experiences of Baptist women ministers through creating safe and welcoming communities of faith; encouraging women to serve and lead in all areas of ministry; making women ministers and leaders visible; recognizing women doing ministry and offering affirmation; and sharing stories of women and call experiences. The following section focuses on practical ways churches and individuals can intentionally nurture the call experiences of Baptist women in ministers.

Practical Implications

My reflection on the research questions leads to practical implications for Baptist individuals and churches in relation to the call experiences of Baptist women ministers. The following focuses on practical and intentional ways to nurture the call experiences of Baptist women ministers including creating better structures for exploring gifts, serving and affirmation, evaluating the presence of women in leadership and within the ministries of the church, and intentionally incorporating and sharing stories about women.

Better Structure for Exploring Gifts, Service, and Affirmation

The impact of Christian service is influential. While service is already a part of most churches, some churches need a more intentional structure for exploring gifts, service placement, and affirmation. Churches can incorporate spiritual gift emphases and inventories into the framework of their service and placement structures. Spiritual gift inventories are questionnaires people answer to help discover their spiritual gifts. These inventories are a starting point for people to explore their gifts. Spiritual gifts need to be taught, discussed and explored more intentionally in churches. Affirmation of spiritual

gifts can come from service placement. Churches need to develop better service placement philosophies. In many churches, service opportunities within the church are filled by a nominating committee. Sometimes this committee seeks to fill slots rather than evaluate and affirm giftedness. Also, churches often rely on those who have always served in certain positions rather than giving opportunities to others who reflect giftedness for a certain area. Service within the church needs to be based on giftedness, not convenience. If churches are more intentional about teaching, recognizing, and affirming giftedness through service opportunities within the church, people will have more opportunities to serve within their giftedness. Serving provides opportunities for people to use and grow confident in their gifts. As more people serve within their giftedness, the church needs to be intentional about ways to offer affirmation. This could be as simple as encouraging ministers and leaders to be mindful of affirming the people who serve alongside of them. This could even include a spiritual gifts and service celebration. This celebration could be a banquet to celebrate the gifts, or a day of service where people are encouraged to serve in ways that express their gifts. Intentional affirmation could come from a spiritual gift spotlight in the church newsletter each week to affirm someone serving in the church by highlighting how they use their gifts. Churches need to create better structures for exploring gifts, service opportunities, and affirmation. As more people serve within their giftedness, more people will connect to God's call on their lives.

Evaluating Women in Leadership and Ministries of the Church

As stated before, women need to be involved in the leadership of the church and these women need to be seen by the larger church body. Women need to be given opportunities to lead in places besides children, music, and missions. Churches need to evaluate their leadership including ministers, deacons, teachers, and ministry leaders to see where women are present and where they can be better represented. Churches also need to make an intentional effort to include women in worship leadership.

Intentionally incorporating women in church leadership would require efforts by pastor search committees, personnel committees, ministerial leaders, and nominating committees. A practical embodiment of this could be a specific evaluation or audit of women in leadership within the church. A committee could be formed to assess women in leadership and women's roles within the church. This committee could evaluate the existing staff, deacons, ministry leaders, committee members, and teachers. This evaluation could include comparing the number of women to men, as well as an examination of where a larger percentage of women serve. The evaluation could also include an examination of the percentage of women in leadership compared to a percentage of active women church members. An audit could include a survey for the church focused on where women are serving and where they are not. An evaluation of women in leadership could help the church see where and how to incorporate women in leadership. This type of evaluation or audit, paired with a better process for exploring gifts, service placement and affirmation, could do wonders for women serving in the church.

Women need to lead in worship. Sunday morning worship is still the most valued time for most Baptist churches and where most church members and visitors gather together. Therefore, women need to be a part of that time. Women need to read scripture, pray, sing, preach, take up the offering, serve communion, baptize, etc. Women need to be intentionally incorporated into church leadership and be given opportunities to share their own stories in worship. If churches have women on staff, they should be included in leading worship every week. This practical inclusion simply takes the pastor and worship planning team being more intentional about planning worship.

Women need to be seen more often serving within their giftedness. Churches need to evaluate where and how women are serving in the church to make sure women are given opportunities to lead in all areas. Women need to be incorporated in to the worship leadership structure, as worship services are still the most highly attended events for most churches. Within a traditionally patriarchal structure, like most Baptist churches, it cannot be assumed women will be given opportunities to lead and serve; therefore, churches must be intentional in their efforts to incorporate women into the leadership structure of the church.

Incorporate Studies about Women

The teaching and preaching ministries of the church need to intentionally study women and issues specifically related to women. Churches can intentionally offer Bible studies about women in the Bible, women in Baptist history, the Baptist freedoms, and feminist theology. Not only do women need to be seen and heard, but a Biblical,

historical, and theoretical basis for women in church leadership and ministry needs to exist.

Studies on women in the Bible, women in Baptist history, Baptist freedoms, and feminist theology help inform Baptist individuals of how women have been involved in the history of the Christian faith and Baptist tradition, as well as how women have been oppressed. Sermons need to focus on women in the Bible. Preachers can preach a sermon series on women or preach sermons on passages that often ignore the women present and bring them to the forefront of the message. Sermon illustrations need to include women and be related to women. Sunday School and Vacation Bible School curriculums need to include stories of women in the Bible. Incorporating women into Sunday School and Vacation Bible School curriculums may require an evaluation of the curriculums used or providing supplemental materials. Wednesday night lessons need to include opportunities to learn about women and women's issues. Special Bible studies need be offered with focus on women in the Bible and in the Christian and Baptist tradition. Stories about women need to be incorporated in curriculum for all ages. Baptist individuals need to know more about women. Baptist individuals need to learn more about the state of women in the Christian faith and Baptist tradition. This can be accomplished through intentional preaching, teaching, and programs.

Conclusion

Practical steps can be made to nurture the call experiences of Baptist women and Baptist women ministers. Churches need to create better structures for exploring gifts, serving and affirming. Churches need to take time to evaluate the presence of women in

leadership and ministries of the church. Churches need to incorporate and share stories about women. However, it is important for Baptist churches and individuals to understand these practical steps require intentionality. Baptist churches and individuals cannot sit and wait for women to become more visible, active, and affirmed within the structure of churches; there must be an active effort to do change this culture within the church. Churches need to make an intentional effort to include women, affirm women, and teach about women.

Further Research in the Area of Baptist Women and God's Call

More research needs to be done in relation to Baptist women and calling. More stories need to be shared and studied. Based on my analysis of these stories, more research needs to be done in the following areas: Baptist women preaching, Baptist women ministers and their relation to social justice, the Baptist ministerial search and hiring process, church dysfunction and church hurt, how Baptist women ministers view God, and Feminist Theology in theological education, and local church practices and teaching.

Preaching

Further research needs to focus on the opportunities Baptist women have to preach the word of God. Preaching involves reflecting on scripture, studying scripture, interpreting scripture, praying, preparing, and presenting. Preaching is an integral part of worship for most Baptist churches. Preaching was mentioned only a few times throughout the narratives. Both Dawn and June, who served in associate pastor roles, expressed their joy in preaching and their desire to have more opportunities to preach.

Evelyn, who served as a senior pastor, and June, who served as an interim, shared their passion for preaching. When talking about women preaching Dawn said, “. . . we don’t get as many shots, I would say, so if we are going to say it, we are going to make it count” (personal communication, October 20, 2015). The desire women ministers have to preach and the reality that Baptist women ministers have fewer opportunities to preach than Baptist men point to an area of future research. Research needs to be done on how often Baptist women get the opportunity to preach. Comparative research could be done in relation to the opportunities to preach for women versus men in the Baptist context. Research could also focus on comparing sermons of Baptist women and men to see if there are obvious differences. Questions for future research could include: How often do Baptist women ministers get the opportunity to preach? Do women preach differently than men? Do people respond differently to women preaching? Preaching was not a major theme in the narratives of the Baptist women minister participants, but it was mentioned. Because preaching is such an integral part of the worship experience, more research needs to focus on Baptist women ministers and preaching.

Social Justice

The term “social justice” was not used often in the narratives of the women participants. However, a few instances of oppression were referenced. Callie Jean shared of her experience in a church and community that experienced “white flight.” She credited that experience with forming her idea of the importance of accepting others. Dawn mentioned an experience with her seminary roommate who left to go to another seminary where her sexuality would be more accepted. Evelyn shared of serving as an

associate pastor at a church when a newspaper reporter approached her to ask about a gay man serving as a deacon. Evelyn also shared of the fear and reality of ageism for her and her husband in seeking employment. June shared her acceptance of her gay brother and her goal as a children's minister to embrace all types of family units within the church. Kim talked about her empathy for her African American brothers and sisters and their struggles with living within a main narrative that is oppressive. Each of these women was able to see injustice. This led me to ask, Are Baptist women, because of historical and experienced oppression, more likely to perceive and seek justice for those who are oppressed? More research needs to be done on the effects of systematic religious oppression in relation to understanding and seeking justice for others. If oppressed persons are more likely and more capable of fighting injustice, especially within Christianity and religious tradition, churches need to do a better job of training, equipping, and using them to change the structures of injustice.

Ministerial Search and Hiring Processes

The search and hiring process was mentioned a few times in the research. Many of the women shared the complexities and difficulties of seeking a professional ministry position and moving ministry positions. Callie Jean talked about the difficulty in discerning where to serve and when to move to another position. Dawn shared her struggles in finding a full-time ministry position and the complicated nature and frustration of dealing with church search committees. June shared the difficulty of finding the right ministry position and church for her personal theology and giftedness. Kim shared of the difficulties in finding a ministry position, especially as part of a clergy

couple, and the difficulties in making decisions to move. Because Baptist churches embrace church freedom, there is no one way Baptist churches search for and employ ministers. Each Baptist church formulates its own process. Navigating this process can be difficult. More research and work needs to be done to improve the ministerial search and hiring process. Most churches do not fully realize the physical, emotional, and economical complexities for the ministers who are searching. These women struggled with the sacrifice of personal relationships, a concern for their spouses' employment, and the consequences for their families. As mothers, they often struggled with the specific effects on their children, a concern that relates to the need for more feminist perspectives in formulating search and hiring processes. Searching for a ministry position is different from searching for a secular job; however, most churches do not understand the intricacies for ministers seeking positions or the implications of moving from one position to another. More research needs to be done on the ministerial search process in relation to how churches search and hire, how ministers search and discern, and the effects of the search and moving process on ministers and their families.

Local Church Dysfunction and Church Hurt

Local church dysfunction is a reality for many local churches. A church is comprised of sinful people coming together to do holy work in the name of Christ. Conflict and dysfunction are painful for many churches. The research participants experienced some local church conflict. Of all the women, Dawn and Kim were affected the most by church conflict. Dawn experienced church conflict through rotating youth ministers, the resigning of her pregnant youth minister, the firing of the pastor of the

church she attended in college, in leaving her church internship, and in her husband's complicated experiences serving in churches. Kim experienced conflict within her home church as a child. The church eventually split. Callie Jean and June shared experiences of church hurt. Callie Jean shared of the pain of supervising a difficult staff member and not being trusted or respected by parents. June shared of the hurt she felt when she was denied the children's ministry position at the church she served as an interim. Church dysfunction and hurt had an impact on these women. Thankfully the existence of conflict and pain did not drive them away from church involvement or professional ministry. However, more research needs to be done on the effects of church dysfunction and hurt. Churches need to better understand the spiritual ramifications of conflict and pain within the church on the larger church body and individuals. Further research on the effects of church dysfunction and hurt can help Baptist churches better deal with conflict and help individuals who have suffered.

View of God

Throughout this study the women participants mentioned God. However, two women shared specific ways they viewed God. June shared her view of God as a God of grace, when going through the loss of a child, and a God of peace, when dealing with disappointment when she was denied the children's ministry position. Kim talked about her view of God as a God of grace, very different from the God of wrath presented by the church of her childhood. The other women talked about the presence of God in their lives, but not as specific as June and Kim. This leads to the question, how do Baptist women ministers, or Baptist women in general, view God? Research could be done on

how women view God in the Baptist context. This type of research could also focus on comparing how Baptist women view God in comparison to Baptist men. If there are differences, research could focus on whether the difference is a result of history of controversy surrounding women's roles in the Southern Baptist tradition or a result of the patriarchal system of traditional religious practice. These attributes June and Kim shared are feminine attributes of God. Whether they realized it, they viewed God from a feminist ideal. This connection leads to another area of further research in regards to Feminist Theology.

Feminist Theology

Feminist Theology was an implied part of the stories of the research participants, but not a very explicit part. More research needs to be done on integrating Feminist Theology into theological education and local church teaching and practices. It was clear these women had very little understanding of Feminist Theology. Research needs to be done in regards to how much students are exposed to Feminist Theology during their theological education. For women students, Feminist Theology offers different perspectives than prominent patriarchal theologies. For male students, Feminist Theology gives a better understanding of the struggles women have within a patriarchal system. While research needs to be done on how to better integrate Feminist Theology in theological education, research also needs to be done on how to teach it in the local church setting. Too often, local church studying and teaching come from the traditional patriarchal perspective. Too often, churches only focus on teaching of faith at a surface level. Remember also, Baptist churches and individuals do not always react positively to

change and difference, so new teaching and ideas must be incorporated thoughtfully. Research needs to be done on how to teach the average church member to study the Bible and learn within different theological perspectives and beyond the literal interpretation. Feminist Theology needs to be more prevalent in the realm of theological education and the local church. Future research needs to be done on how to integrate Feminist Theology intentionally and thoughtfully.

Conclusion

Research always leads to more research. While this study focused on the call experiences of Baptist women, other information gathered throughout the process led me to ideas for future research. Following this research additional research can be done on Baptist women preaching, Baptist women ministers and social justice, the Baptist ministerial search and hiring process, the effects of church dysfunction and church hurt, how Baptist women ministers view God, and how to better integrate Feminist Theology into theological education and the local church. These are just a few areas that could benefit from further research in relation to the topic of the call experiences of Baptist women ministers.

Conclusion

My study on the call experiences of Baptist women ministers has focused on call, women in Southern Baptist history, and the stories of five Baptist women ministers from a Christian, Baptist, Feminist Theology perspective. Through this research, it is clear God calls Baptist women, despite the patriarchal atmosphere of Christian tradition and

the controversy surrounding women in the Southern Baptist tradition. God calls Baptist women and they respond.

Common themes I uncovered in the stories of the five Baptist women were family, early church involvement, Christian service, ministerial role models, education, affirmation and personal doubt. As noted previously, these Baptist women experienced the call to ministry within the Christian faith and community through service, a feeling or nudging, and affirmation. Also, noted previously, these Baptist women responded with doubt, by consulting with family members or ministerial role models, and by pursuing theological education. Baptist churches and individuals can be a part of nurturing the call of Baptist women ministers through creating safe and welcoming communities of faith, encouraging women to serve and lead in all areas of ministry, making women ministers and leaders more visible, recognizing women doing ministry and offering affirmation, and sharing stories of women and call experiences. My examination of the research led to ideas for future research in relation to Baptist women preaching, Baptist women ministers and social justice, the Baptist ministerial search and hiring process, the effects of church dysfunction and church hurt, how Baptist women ministers view God, and how to better integrate Feminist Theology into theological education and the local church. While the focus of my project was the call experiences of Baptist women ministers, many of the lessons learned can be applied in nurturing the call of all Christians in the context of any Christian community.

The outcome of my research is a better understanding of the call experiences of Baptist women ministers and how Baptist churches and individuals can be a more

effective part of that experience. God's call is above the boundaries created by systematic religion. God calls Baptist women to professional ministry. God's call compels response, despite discouragement and oppression. Baptist women respond by fervently pursuing God's call. God's call is an individual experience nurtured and embodied within the realm of Christian community. Baptist churches and individuals are an integral and intentional part of nurturing call experiences.

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APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

Narrative research focuses on people's stories. This research method appeals to the topic of the calling experiences of Baptist women in ministry because individual call experiences are shared best through personal narratives. This methodology chapter includes two major sections. The first section explores narrative research, including different forms of narrative research, the background and history of narrative research, key tenets of narrative research, main theorists and contributions of narrative research, main critiques of narrative research, and why narrative research is a fit for this specific research project. The second section presents the actual methods used for researching the call experiences of Baptist women in ministry, including the task of choosing participants, interview methods, and data analysis. This chapter provides an overall understanding of narrative research and its applications for this specific study.

Narrative Research

Narrative research begins with sharing personal stories. As John Creswell (2007) writes, "As a method, it begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals" (p. 54). A formal study of narrative research helps in understanding why this method pairs so beautifully with the stories of the call experiences of Baptist women in ministry. In this section, the following facets of narrative research are explored: different forms, the background and history, key tenets, a main theorist and contribution, and main critiques. The final part of this section of the chapter affirms the choice of a narrative method for this specific study.

Forms and Types of Narrative Research

Because narrative research is based on the stories of people's lives, the forms are vast and varied. The most common forms of narrative are biographical, autobiographical, life history, and oral history. Creswell (2007) writes of these forms,

A **biographical study** is a form of narrative study in which the researcher writes and records the experiences of another person's life. **Autobiography** is written and recorded by the individuals who are the subject of the study. A **life history** portrays an individual's entire life, while a personal experience story is a narrative study of an individual's personal experiences found in single or multiple episodes, private situations, or communal folklore. An **oral history** consists of gathering personal reflections of events and their causes and effects from one individual or several individuals. (p. 55)

For this specific topic, the form includes a combination of life history and oral history.

While participants are asked to tell the stories of their lives, they are also be asked to share specific reflections on their calling and ministry. Within these different types of narratives, this method also allows for focus on a specific group or context. Creswell (2007) describes this facet of this research method when he writes,

Narrative studies may have a specific contextual focus, such as teachers or children in classrooms, or the stories told about organizations. Narratives may be guided by a theoretical lens or perspective. The lens may be used to advocate for Latin Americans through using testimonios, or it may be a feminist lens used to report the stories of women, (see, e.g., Personal Narratives Group, 1989), a lens that shows how women's voices are muted, multiple, and contradictory. (p. 55)

Narrative research gives permission to focus on one specific group of women in a very specific context. Therefore, this type of research depends more on the stories gathered than the specific research model. According to Riessman (1993), "Narrative analysis

takes as its object of investigation the story itself” (p. 1). This method is always guided by the stories. Though not as formally structured as other research methods, narrative is a respected form of research because the process of sharing stories for understanding and learning has been used throughout history. Narrative research takes many forms and remains narrative as long as the focus of the inquiry is the stories that are read, heard, and gathered.

Background and History

The act of telling and re-telling stories has been a part of learning, growing, and understanding throughout history. Before information was written down, published in articles and books, and posted on-line, it was shared orally between people. Stories have been passed down through the generations. These stories have been told for entertainment, but have also been told for the purpose of survival and insight. Now narrative research, the process of collecting and analyzing these stories, is accepted as a form of research, largely because of the traditional esteem for storytelling and changes in society that have sparked a need to tell more and different stories.

Though stories have always been a part of life, they have not always been a part of scholarly research. Narrative research has emerged as a way of representing the marginalized people who were not included in traditional research, and as a way and want to better understand people and society. This research method has emerged as society and people have changed and those changes could not simply be studied with statistics and formal entities. Changes in society and the movements of people have a profound impact on research, how it is done, who participates, what questions are asked,

etc. Casey (1995-1996), reflects on World War II and its effects on people for years to come,

One cannot seriously consider 20th-century concepts of the self, for example, without making reference to World War II. The massive material destruction of families, communities, and traditions and the psychological effects of being overwhelmed by authoritarianism and encircled by annihilation (extreme experiences subsequently encoded in existentialist thought) are integral components in succeeding understandings of the individual. (p. 214)

The social movements of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s have also influenced society and research; “these people actively engaged in the demolition and reconstruction of existing social arrangements on a massive scale” (Casey, 1995–1996, p. 215). Social reconstruction brought more people and different people to academia and encouraged research, a different or new kind of research. As Casey (1995–1996) writes,

Part of the legacy of these social movements is that the demography of the university population, the design of college curriculum and the direction of scholarly research have all been significantly altered . . . The celebration of ordinary people’s heroism in liberal and radical narrative research (a major emphasis of the current trend) undermines the conservative glorification of great White men in the established autobiographical tradition. (p. 215)

Narrative has grown into a widely-used form of research. Because narrative research has broadened the realm of researchers, participants, and topics, sometimes older traditional methods are not adequate. An example of this change is noted in Chapter III of this project in relation to theoretical framework. Feminist theology grew because more women were studying theology and doing theological research. In order to include these women within the research, methods and practices had to change. Narrative research is a

part of that change. This method is an avenue to explore and present people, stories, and ideas that not been traditionally included in research.

Narrative is different way to research, with different topics, different subjects, and different goals, because of changes in society and academia, and continues to gather interest, respect, and usage. Though based on the foundational and historical emphasis and interest in stories, narrative research has become a radical way of doing research. Jane Elliott (2005) writes of the beginnings of formal narrative research, “The explicit interest in narrative in the social sciences can perhaps be traced back to the early 1980s. In 1981, Daniel Bertaux’s edited collection *Biography and Society* began with a manifesto for the importance of attention to stories in sociology” (p. 5). The narrative trend “gathered momentum” in the 1990s as more journals and academic works were published in relation to narrative research, including the *Narrative and Life History* journal, *The Narrative Study of Lives*, and Riessman’s *Narrative Analysis* (Elliott, 2005, p. 5). The trend has continued to grow within many areas of study and research. According to Casey (1995–1996),

Depending on one’s theory about the significance of postmodernism, narrative and narrative research can be seen as serving very different social functions. In a world controlled by TV talk shows, tabloid exposes, and slogan T-shirts, telling one’s story becomes exhibitionism, and listening to another’s becomes voyeurism. Alternatively (or perhaps complementarily), storytelling is the way to put shards of experience together, to (re)construct identity, community, and tradition, if only temporarily. Any discussion of narrative would be incomplete without recognizing the creativity of current postmodern cultural strategies and the ingenuity of their inventors. (Casey, 1995–1996, p. 216)

With the invention of technology and the Internet and their influence on the world, tendencies toward narrative have only grown. News broadcasts, reality television, blogs, individual social media sites, magazines, books, etc., emphasize narratives, personal and communal. Now narrative research is used in many different fields. “Narrative research is, at present, distinctly interdisciplinary, including elements of literary, historical, anthropological, sociological, psychological, and cultural studies” (Casey, 1995–1996, p. 212). This method reaches beyond the boundaries of other traditional research because it allows for an intimate look into the experiences of individuals. The trend toward narrative in society and research looks to be continually on the rise. Narratives are continually being created, shared, told, and transformed; therefore, there is not an end to their need and appeal. Stories are foundational and radical. Stories have always been a part of our lives, society, research, learning and understanding and will continue to be as long as they continue to be shared.

Stories have allowed for people to learn and make sense of the world for generations. Narrative research allows for the exploration of stories for the goal of learning and growing for individuals and society. Narrative appeals to people because it allows for pieces of stories to be put together and shared within community. This method also appeals to people because it allows a glimpse into stories we may not be familiar with. Narrative research has grown out of a foundational connection with story and has grown to be a respected method of research, especially for those whose stories are not a part of the existing narrative.

Key Tenets

Narrative research focuses on the lives and experiences of people. Key tenets of this method are a focus on those who have not been presented in other research, participants being actively involved in the research, the reality of storytelling and listening, and the goal of change.

A great quality of narrative research is the focus and inclusion of the lives and experiences of people who have not traditionally been represented. According to Casey (1995–1996), “And an especially appealing attribute of oral history is the way in which it can display the assets of those ordinarily considered to have none” (Casey, 1995–1996, p. 220). Narrative research expands our knowledge and understanding of oppressed people and groups. This research method seeks out those who have been kept silent in traditional literature and research. It focuses on hearing and learning from those who have not been considered important. Narrative research focuses on people and their stories, not their social, economic, or education levels. It gives power and importance to the stories of all people.

Narrative research is not limited to the knowledge and expertise of the researcher. This research allows participants to be actively involved in the research. As Creswell (2007) writes, “In narrative research, a key theme has been the turn toward the relationship between the researcher and the researched in which both parties will learn and change in the encounter” (p. 57). This method allows for the researcher and those being researched both to be involved in finding and creating meaning. In other forms of research, the researcher is seen to have the knowledge and power over the research,

which is contrary to narrative research which allows for relationship and cooperation.

The researcher is not the only one with knowledge; the researcher participant is seen as having expertise also. This creates a very intimate relationship between the researcher, the participants, and the actual research project. “Rigid demarcation of inquirer and inquire roles is blurred in life history enquiry” (Shacklock & Thorp, 2005, p. 18).

Though there are challenges with this open relationship in the research process, there are also rewards. With respect and open communication comes a wealth of knowledge and more sharing, which often lead to more revelation, meaning, and knowledge. Narrative research allows for a co-creation of knowledge between research and participants.

A key tenet of narrative research is the reality that it is based on stories told by people and heard by people; this is part of its beauty and complicated nature. According to Riessman (1993), “Meaning is ambiguous because it arises out of a process of interaction between people: self, teller, listener and recorder, analyst, and reader.

Although the goal may be to tell the whole truth, our narratives and others’ narratives are our worldly creations” (p. 15). The reality of a narrative is that it is a story told from a point of view, within certain contexts, and is heard from a point of view, within certain contexts. Narrative research does not deny the challenges of presentation and interpretation. Rather, in narrative research, researchers must be aware of the realities of this delicate work. As written by the Popular Memory Group,

Every narrative is highly constructed text structured around a cultural framework of meaning and shaped by particular patterns of inclusion, omission, and disparity. The principle value of a narrative is that its information comes complete with evaluations, explanations, and theories and with selectivities,

silences, and slippage that are intrinsic to its representation of reality. (as cited in Casey, 1995-1996, p. 234).

Selectivity, silence, and slippage are a part of narratives. Researchers must be mindful of these at every stage of narrative research. Selectivity is the idea that each person chooses what to share when telling his or her story. Participants include and exclude certain aspects of their stories. The inclusions and exclusions speak as loudly as the actual story shared. Silence is what is left out of the story all together. Researchers must be attuned to what is not talked about at all in shared stories of participants. Slippage occurs when one part of the story does not match up to another. Researchers must be engaged enough to see and hear when slippage occurs. Selectivity, silence and slippage are realities of narrative research. Along with the complications of telling the story for the participant, comes the complications of hearing the story for the researcher. Subjectivity is a part of all research, especially narrative. According to Allan Peshkin (1988), “Whatever the substance of one’s persuasions at a given point, one’s subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed” (p. 17). While narrative is based on the stories told by the participants, it is also based on the reception of the stories by the researcher. As Riessman (1993) writes, “All forms of representation of experience are limited portraits” (p. 15). These factors and limitations cannot be ignored, but rather need to be part of the research analysis. The realities and difficulties of stories being told and heard by human beings with feelings, emotions, assumptions, and limitations are part of the co-creation of narrative and knowledge within this method of research.

Another key component of narrative research is the goal of change. The goal of telling, listening, and sharing stories within narrative research is to make the stories known in hopes that change will occur in the lives of people within society. This is evident in Casey's (1995-1996) article, *The New Narrative Research in Education*, "The new narrative research has radically changed educational inquiry. The introduction of new information on women's lives and work has ruptured existing definitions and continues to change the very terms of discussion in education" (p. 239). The goal of sharing narratives within narrative research is to introduce new perspectives and enact change. This is the reason that much of narrative research focuses on those who have been oppressed. Narrative research is not just about sharing and hearing stories for entertainment's sake, but for the sake of transformation. Transformation can take the form of individual and/or communal thought and practice. Transformation can occur in the researcher, in the participant, in the reader, in lives, in places of work, in homes and families, in societies, etc. The goal of narrative research is not simply to report how people and things have been and are, but to challenge, change, and transform for the better.

Narrative research is simple and complicated. It is simple in its focus on the foundational idea of stories as important. However, this research is complex due to its focus on the stories of the silenced, its willingness to being a collective venture between participants and researchers, the challenges of embracing the realities of shared stories, and its purpose to enact change. Narrative research is a beautiful weaving of simplicity and complexity.

Main Theorist and Contribution

Because narrative research is used in a variety of ways within many different fields of study, is difficult to identify main theorists and contributions. This section will focus on one of the main theorists, Catherine Kohler Riessman, and one major contribution, its use in diverse areas of study.

Catherine Kohler Riessman is the author of *Narrative Analysis*. According to Elliott (2005), “The publication, in 1993, of Riessman’s short text on narrative analysis, in the long-running Sage series on qualitative research methods, can also be seen as a milestone in establishing narrative as a part of the methodological toolkit for qualitative researchers” (p. 5). Riessman’s work is an introduction to the models, methods, and uses and limitations of narrative research. Riessman is clear in her presentation of narrative as a method with its purpose and limitations. According to Riessman (1993), “We cannot give voice, but we do hear voices that we record and interpret” (p. 8). Gathering stories and sharing them is foundational to narrative research. Researchers do not “give voice,” instead allow space for voices to be heard and shared. Riessman is honest in her understanding of sharing and interpreting stories. Participants choose what to share and researchers choose what to notice (Reissman, 1993, p. 8-9). Catherine Riessman’s *Narrative Analysis* is a major contribution to the area of narrative research. Her contributions are still relevant and often used in understanding and doing narrative research.

A major contribution of narrative research is its ability to be used throughout diverse areas of research. Susan E. Chase (2005) characterizes contemporary narrative

inquiry as, “an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods—all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by one who lives them” (p. 651). Narrative research appeals to different lenses, methods, and disciplines. According to Riessman (1993), “The study of narrative does not fit neatly within the boundaries of any single scholarly field” (p. 1). This method did not grow out of one category of research and is not used in one area of research. “Narrative inquiry borders and draws on scholarship and methodology, history, and literary theory” (Wertz et al., 2011, p. 63). Because narrative inquiry is so open and vast, it has been used in a variety of disciplines. Elliott (2005) writes, “Over the past two decades, the awareness of the importance of narrative among qualitative researchers has spread through a wide range of different substantive areas” (p. 5). These areas include health sciences, criminology, family and relationships, and education (Elliott, 2005, pp. 5–6). Narrative research is used by a multitude of researchers, in many fields, for a diverse array of research projects. For Elliott (2005), “It is important to stress that narrative crosses the usual disciplinary boundaries and has been taken up as a useful analytic tool by researchers with very diverse backgrounds” (p. 7). One major contribution of narrative research is its flexibility to be used across different methods.

Narrative research has continued to grow as a respected research method, through the work of scholars like Catherine Kohler Riessman. Due to the vast usage of narrative research it is hard to pinpoint major theorists as different narrative researchers exist in each discipline. However, the ability to use narrative in different fields is the major

contribution of this research method. Its usage in diverse fields has allowed for the sharing of and learning from an enormous number of stories from different perspectives for different research purposes.

Main Critiques

All research methods have their own challenges. Some of the most popular critiques of narrative research are the small number of participants and large amount of information, the subjectivity and reflexivity involved, and the validity of the story shared and told.

One challenge of narrative research is the small number of participants. Due to the intimate and detailed nature of narrative research, most narrative research inquiries include a small number of participants. As Riessman (1993) writes, “Narrative analysis is not useful for studies of large numbers of nameless, faceless subjects” (p. 69). Qualitative research often uses many subjects or many points of reference in hope of obtaining more accurate information. However, due to the nature of narrative research, interviewing many participants is not the goal. For most narrative research, the emphasis is on the quality and detail of the stories gathered, not on the amount of information obtained. While the detail often obtained within narrative research is greatly appreciated, in order to obtain that detail, researchers often spend large amounts of time with participants. While the number of participants in most narrative research projects is small, the amount of information gathered is often massive. This amount of information requires time and effort. “The methods are slow and painstaking” (Riessman, 1993, p. 69). Massive amounts of information and details are difficult to work through. This

method requires a lot of work, reading, coding, and reflecting on behalf of the researcher in order to formulate what can be learned from the research. This process is difficult, slow, and subjective. Some critique the validity of research because the small number of participants, questioning if trends or knowledge can be acquired from such a small batch of participants. The amount of information often gathered through narrative research is also a challenge, as questions arise as to how realistic and objective the research can be. However, the focus of narrative research is the story shared, not the number of participants or amount of information gathered.

Other challenges of narrative research are the realities of subjectivity and reflexivity. Subjectivity is part of all qualitative research. As mentioned before, according to Alan Peshkin (1998), one's subjectivity "cannot be removed" (p. 17). Narrative research requires thought, reflection and interpretation on behalf of the researcher. All researchers are human and come with their own beliefs, understandings, biases, and assumptions. According to Glesne (2011), subjectivity "is equated with bias and seen as something to control against and to mitigate its influence in research" (p. 151). The reality is no researcher can be totally objective. Therefore, it is important for researchers to be honest and thoughtful of their own stories, history, and beliefs pertaining to their research. Subjectivity is part of being a researcher, a part that should be dealt with honestly and openly. Reflexivity is also a challenge for narrative research. While subjectivity explores the researcher's personal assumptions and notices, reflexivity admits the relevance of subjectivity while exploring how all aspects of the research interact. According to Glesne (2011), "... reflexivity generally involves critical

reflection on how researcher, research participants, setting, and research procedures interact and influence each other” (p. 151). Reflexivity acknowledges the fact that researchers affect participants, participants affect researchers, and each influences the research itself. Reflexivity also acknowledges that timing, setting, questions, methods, and relationships can affect the research. According to Hesse-Biber and Piatelli (2012), “Reflexivity is a holistic process that takes place along all stages of the research process—from the formulation of the research problem, to the shifting positionalities of the researcher and participants, through interpretation and writing” (p. 560). Essentially, reflexivity is embracing the reality that research is not done in a vacuum, but is conducted in specific contexts with human people. Reflexivity also embraces the notion that narrative research is not done in a stagnant environment, but in an ever changing and evolving world. Understanding subjectivity and reflexivity is also why it is important that narrative research remain collaborative and not simply focused on the ideas and goals of the researcher alone. Creswell (2007) writes about this need for collaboration, “Active collaboration with the participant is necessary, and researchers need to discuss the participant’s stories as well as be reflective about their own personal and political background, which shapes how they ‘restory’ the account” (p. 57). The collaborative nature of narrative research allows for a checks and balances of sorts. The shared responsibility of the researcher and the participants allows for working through the certainties of subjectivity and reflexivity. For opponents of narrative research, subjectivity and reflexivity are reasons to criticize narrative research. However, for narrative researchers subjectivity and reflexivity are viewed as pieces of all research.

Instead of claiming objectivity, narrative researchers seek to embrace the realities of these two existing elements within research.

Validity is another major critique when it comes to using narrative research. A great portion of this critique is based on the essence of the story itself. Reissman (1993) writes, “In the telling, there is an inevitable gap between the experience as I lived it and any communication about it” (p. 10). Narrative research is based on stories told by and about people and their experiences. These stories are usually reflective of previous experiences. Therefore, there is always a risk that the gap between the experience and the reflecting on and telling of the story has an effect on the actual story shared. This is why selectivity, slippage, and silence are key components of narrative research.

Narrative researchers understand the issues involved in a gap between the experience and the telling and are mindful of that when participating in research. However, this is still a main critique when it comes to the validity of narrative research.

Another issue in dealing with the validity of narrative research is the lack of access the researcher often has to the actual experiences being shared. “Investigators do not have direct access to another’s experience. We deal with ambiguous representations of it—talk, text, interaction, and interpretation” (Riessman, 1993, p. 8). The indirect access to the story itself raises issues of validity because the research becomes an interpretation of the researcher based on an interpretation of the research participant. This allows for a great deal of difference between the actual experience and the research project. “The general notion of validity concerns the believability of a statement or

knowledge claim” (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 474). Validity is a major concern for all researchers; therefore, the challenge of validity is not to be overlooked.

The need for trustworthiness and credibility in narrative research is obtained by creating open and honest relationships with participants, evaluating subjectivity and reflexivity, and member checking. In narrative research it is important to establish a trustworthy relationship between the researcher and participants. This relationship is created through open communication and time. Due to the validity issues, narrative researchers need to be honest about existing subjectivity and reflexivity. Member checking allows for participants to be active in the research and helps to foster that open relationship between researcher and participants. Member checking also ensures the validity of the researcher’s representation of the story. The small number of research participants, issues of subjectivity and reflexivity, and validity of the stories told are some of the overall critiques and challenges with narrative research. Narrative researchers must be attentive to the critiques and challenges when planning, preparing, participating, and presenting their research.

Narrative Research for the Call Experiences of Baptist Women Ministers

A narrative research approach is an appropriate way to explore the call experiences of Baptist women in ministry. A narrative approach allows for my personal subjectivity as a researcher, allows the stories of these women to guide the research, is known for its inclusion of stories that have traditionally not been told, and focuses on transformation.

I am a Baptist woman minister. I have my own personal call story and experiences. I approach this with my own subjectivity. Narrative research allows for the existence of this subjectivity. My subjectivity is a challenge as I must remain mindful of how my own experiences play into my thoughts and assumptions as a researcher. However, my subjectivity does not disqualify from this research; instead my identity as a Baptist woman minister and experience with God's call ignites my passion for the research. More details surrounding subjectivity and reflexivity in relation to his specific project will be discussed later.

Narrative research in its simplest form is focused on exploring and learning from shared stories. This research allows for an in-depth look at the lives of the research participants. For this specific project, this method allows for an in-depth look into the lives of Baptist women ministers. Narrative research encourages the stories to guide the research. The narrative approach allows for freedom within the research. As a researcher, I am presented with questions and ideas; however, as a narrative researcher, I am guided by the stories shared. Instances of faith and life, including call, are personal and sacred. Narrative research opens and frees the research process to include these personal sacred elements of the stories shared.

Narrative research is right for this research project because it often focuses on a group of people who are not usually included in research. The experiences of Baptist women, especially women ministers, are largely excluded and ignored in the larger picture of Baptist history and tradition. While Baptist history does include some of the controversy of women's roles and place in the church, the stories of women are not told

enough. Traditionally narrative research has allowed for the inclusion of people and groups who are not largely included in other types of research. This research method allows space for Baptist women ministers to share their personal experiences.

Narrative research is appropriate for this research subject due to its focus and goal of change. A narrative study into the call experiences of Baptist women can change the way society, churches, church leaders, other women, and other Christians view Baptist women ministers and/or the call experience. My passion is to change the focus of research on Baptist women ministers from a focus on gender and history to a focus on the call of God and work of God in the lives of God's women servants and the work of God's servants in the world. The narrative approach, along with the essence of freedom, responsibility and hope, aids in that goal. The stories of the call experiences of Baptist women in ministers within a narrative research project changes the focus of research on Baptist women in general.

The narrative research approach is an interesting and organic way to approach my personal research interest in the call experiences of Baptist women in ministry. It allows for the acknowledgement of my own story and subjectivity, allows freedom for the stories to guide the research, focuses on the inclusion of research not traditionally researched within other methods, and works for change.

Methodology

A narrative research approach focuses on people's stories. Narrative research aligns with the topic of the call experiences of Baptist women in ministry because these individual call experiences are extremely personal. These women have the opportunity to

tell their own story, in their own words. This method allows for an exploration into the lives and call experiences of these women on an intimate and personal level. This section includes the basics and logistics of the research methods including: subjectivity and reflexivity, the central research questions, how participants were chosen, risks and benefits, interview methods, data analysis, and confidentiality and security measures.

Subjectivity and Reflexivity

As a Baptist women minister, my subjectivity during this project cannot be denied. Because of my own subjectivity, reflexivity also came into play. One facet of my subjectivity was realizing not all call experiences were the same as mine. To embrace my personal definition of call as written in Chapter I, I had to be open to call experiences that were different from mine. I shared my personal call experience in the prologue. While my call experience was a process, one moment had a profound impact. This was not the case for the women of this study. Therefore, I was mindful of my own story in hearing, interpreting, and presenting their stories. As a Baptist woman minister I also have personal experience with how individuals and churches have nurtured my call. Therefore, I was open to my own experience, but also sought to be open to different ways individuals and churches could nurture and encourage call. My own experiences and feelings in relation to experiencing, responding, and nurturing call were a part of my hearing, analyzing, and presenting the call experiences of the five women in the study.

Reflexivity was a part of this narrative research. The first aspect of reflexivity was related to my subjectivity. As a woman Baptist minister, I was able to relate to the participants and they were able to relate to me. This allowed for an easy connection and

forming of an open relationship. The participants knew the focus of the research was the call experience; therefore, they focused their stories around their call and ministry. This focus allowed for silences and selectivities around other aspects of their lives. Most information shared focused on their faith development, call, and ministry. Other areas and details of their lives were not shared due to the focus of the study. Another area of reflexivity involved the time and setting of the research. Three of the five participants chose to meet for interviews at their current ministry settings. For these interviews, we moved to quieter rooms away from the offices of the church where we could be uninterrupted. However, it was possible these settings inhabited and influenced what was shared. Reflexivity was also experienced with two participants who lost their fathers. Callie Jean spoke of her father often. She shared in a later reflection that her father had passed away soon before our research began and that may have been why she focused more on her father than her mother. Kim also reflected on her father differently in the final interview. Her father died between the second and third interviews. This loss influenced her sharing and her reflection on the process. An important aspect of reflexivity was experienced through the research method. A narrative approach allowed an open-ended discussion, but also allowed for the participants to decide what to share and not share. These silences and selectivities impacted the research. A final reflexivity was evident in current atmosphere in moderate and progressive Baptist life in relation to women in ministry. These women served in ministry positions because of their choices to pursue the call and serve in churches that supported women in ministry. The research would have been different if these women were in settings that were not

supportive. Reflexivity focuses on how the different aspects of research affect each other. Subjectivity and reflexivity were manifested in this research process. These important aspects of qualitative research were not denied, but critical explored.

Central Research Questions

There were three overarching research questions that guided this study of the call experiences of Baptist women ministers. First, how do Baptist women experience a call to ministry? Second, how do Baptist women respond to the call to ministry? Lastly, how can Baptist churches and individuals help encourage and nurture women ministers in accepting and responding to their calling? These three research questions guided the entire study and presentation of this research project.

Research Participants

An important part of narrative research is choosing the participants. For this research project, participants were defined and chosen based on criteria set forth. Once research participants were chosen and agreed to be a part of the research, an open relationship with the participants was started and participants were invited to be an active part of the research.

While the researcher in me wanted to narrowly define the participants, the more I defined these participants, the more I played into the systems that have been created that often presented themselves as challenges for Baptist women called to serve in professional ministry. At first I pondered including ordained Baptist women ministers who currently serve in a local church setting. However, because of Baptist history and tradition, one cannot assume that all called Baptist women have been given the

opportunity to serve in a church, as many Baptist women ministers have sought or been forced to serve in other ministry settings. Also, traditionally the ordination of ministers has been a task for the local church. Because each local Baptist church has church freedom, as a researcher I could not assume all called Baptist women ministers have been a part or are a part of a supportive church and have been given the opportunity for ordination. Therefore, I chose to define my research participants simply as Baptist women who have experience with the Southern Baptist tradition, who serve in ministry.

“Baptist women” is an elusive definition, as mentioned in early chapters, because the nature of the Baptist identity is freedom. Therefore, for this research project, the focus was to find women who identify as Baptist. Because this project focused on the oppression Baptist women have suffered within the conservative Southern Baptist context, it was important to find women who had experience with the Southern Baptist tradition, with the understanding the women may no longer associate with the Southern Baptist tradition. The goal was to find Baptist women who served in ministry. This ministry was not defined as full-time or with- in the church context due to the realities of oppression that exist. However, an effort was made to include women in different ministry roles. This definition ensured the women ministers identified as Baptist, had some experience with the Southern Baptist tradition, and were serving out the call of God in some form of ministry.

Choosing participants was an overwhelming task of defining parameters, developing a list of possible participants, and narrowing down participants. Even though participants were defined, other factors were important including: the number of

participants, my relationship with the participants, a variety in participants, and the location of participants. For the project, I chose to include five Baptist women ministers. This small number was based on my understanding of the in-depth care and time needed for each narrative. Also, keeping in mind as a Baptist woman minister, I had to eliminate friends and partners in ministry who were too close to me and would be considered a challenge to research integrity. Another goal was to seek to include a variety of ages and ministry contexts. I did not want to have five participants similar in age, serving in the same ministry role—for example, children’s ministers in their 30s—as this could limit the scope of understanding and knowledge relating to call experiences. Another factor in choosing participants was proximity. I limited my search for participants to the southeast region of the United States, and ultimately to North Carolina, due to the amount of time and finances needed for traveling to and from interviews. The process of making a list of possible participants began with pulling together a number of resources. In the past, I served on two committees associated with moderate Baptist life, Baptist Women in Ministry of North Carolina and the Leadership Development Council of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina. These two committees introduced me to many ministers throughout the state. I also consulted with a former divinity school contact and a leader within the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina about women who fit the criteria and who would be willing to participate in such a study. From a large list of possible participants, a list of 15 was generated including a variety of age groups and ministry contexts. The list of fifteen was divided into a list of five top participants and ten alternates. Of the first five contacted, four agreed. One declined based on personal

life circumstances. A woman was contacted from the list of other possible participants and that woman agreed. The five women chosen were Callie Jean, Dawn, Evelyn, June, and Kim. Details about the participants are shared in Chapter IV through the sharing of their stories and analysis. Choosing participants was based on the defining of participants as Baptist women, who had experience with the Southern Baptist Convention, who served in ministry, and also based on factors of variety, previous relationship with me, the researcher, and location.

An important part of narrative research is creating an open relationship between the researcher and research participants. Narrative research is not limited to the knowledge and expertise of the researcher. Narrative research allows for participants to be actively involved in the research. “In narrative research, a key theme has been the turn toward the relationship between the researcher and the researched in which both parties will learn and change in the encounter” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). This relationship began with the logistics of gaining access from IRB to perform this specific research including; completing the IRB application, creating an initial recruitment email, and obtaining an official human consent form. Initial contact was made with participants after IRB approval in the form of a recruitment email. Each of the five participants were sent an email detailing the focus of the project, the guidelines for participants, the commitment required to participate, and my contact information in case of any clarifications needed or questions about the project and process. After each participant agreed to participate, the *University of North Carolina at Greensboro Consent to Act as a Human Participant* form was mailed to the participant. This form included detailed information about the study,

including focus, methods, risks, and benefits. Each participant was given time to read and review the form before signing and returning the form at our first meeting. I sought to create an open relationship by sharing my passion for Baptist women in ministry and the call experience with participants. In initial communications and our first meetings, I sought to share information about myself, my life, my call, and my ministry. I continued to correspond through phone calls and emails before initial interviews so neither the participants, nor I, felt like we were communicating as strangers, and between interviews to continue the relationship. During this initial communication, I made sure participants were aware their names along with any other information that would be pertinent to their identity would be changed to protect their identity. Throughout the interview process, each participant was given the interview questions before the interviews, understanding that follow-up questions may be added. This allowed the participants to feel prepared and comfortable when approaching an interview. An open relationship between researcher and participant is key to narrative research. This relationship was built on being up front with research commitments, showing passion for the research matter, sharing personal information, and opening lines of communication.

During the initial stages of communication, research participants were notified of their active role in the research process. Throughout the process, participants were invited to be part of the research, not just in the telling of their stories, but also in the reflecting on them. Throughout the process, participants were reminded of the significance of their stories and reminded they were co-creators of this research. They were included in the research project, as their first interviews helped determine the

questions for the second, and the first and second interviews helped determine the questions for the final interview. These questions also encouraged their participation in the research as a whole. For example, one purpose of this research was to find ways Baptists individuals and churches can better nurture the call of Baptist women ministers, and each participant was asked for their opinion on how this can be done. Participants were also invited to engage in member checking. Participants were given the opportunity to review the important themes and stories pulled out of their narratives and given the opportunity to reflect on what they chose to share, share any silences that existed, and expound upon anything left unfinished. Participants were also given the opportunity to read the analysis chapter of the dissertation for their final thoughts and approval. Through the process of member checking, only minor changes were made about the timing of events, the use of a specific pseudonym, and specifics of certain stories, such as settings or people involved. Throughout the research process, participants were invited and encouraged to be active participants.

Research participants for this study were carefully defined, chosen, invited, and prepared for this research project. The choosing, preparing, and incorporating of these participants in the research was influenced by the nature of narrative research, the subject matter, and the formal guidelines of research mandated by UNCG. The goal was to create an open relationship where both the researcher and participants were a part of the research.

Risks and Benefits

All research requires an assessment of the risks and benefits. For narrative research, it is important to assess the risks and benefits for the researcher and participants. For this project, the risks for the researcher included change in thought, belief or perspective and the risk of sharing work that may be controversial in some fields of Baptist and/or feminist thought. The benefits for the researcher included gaining insight and understanding in relation to the call experiences of Baptist women and completing the project for a Ph.D. degree which could open up a world of possibilities for the researcher. The risks for the research participants were determined to be minimal by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Participants were given the right to not respond to any question they did not want to answer. Participants were also given the contact information for the Office of Research Integrity in case they had questions or concerns about their rights and risks. A benefit of participating in this study was the sharing of their story. This sharing allowed for the possibility of gaining a better understanding of their personal call experience and how they could encourage others. I believe each of the participants benefited in this way. Risks and benefits are a part of all research. For this particular project, the risks were minimal and benefits encouraging.

Method: Interview

The specific method for this narrative research project was interview. A method of three interviews was created. Before the initial interview, participants were educated in the purpose and process of the research through a recruitment email, a consent form,

and other communication. Participants were also informed of the format of the research, including the number of interviews and general goal of each. Each interview was recorded on a recording device and saved to the device. Handwritten notes were also taken during the interviews.

The three-interview process allowed space for each participant to tell her story, for follow-up and more in-depth questions pertaining to the research, and for concluding thoughts as the process ended. The purpose of the first interview was to allow the participants to share their stories without any leading questions, with the understanding the participants were informed about the specifics of the research project, so their stories may have reflected the research interests. The first initial interview began with one simple prompt, “Tell me the story of your life,” as suggested by Dr. Kathleen Casey, a member of my committee and experienced narrative researcher. Clarifying questions were allowed during this set of interviews if needed. Each of these interviews lasted around two hours each. The information gathered from the first set of interviews provided a basis for this narrative research and helped in the formation of questions for the second interview. Questions in this second set of interviews were based around emerging themes and silences and selectivities found in the first set of interviews. An outline of the questions is included as an addendum to Appendix A. Each of these interviews lasted between one and half to two hours each. The third set of interviews consisted of concluding questions. The questions during these interviews focused on concluding thoughts from the first two interviews and to allowed participants to reflect on being a part of the research process. An outline of the questions is included as an

addendum to Appendix A. Each of these interviews lasted forty-five minutes to one hour each. This three-interview process produced a huge amount of data from each participant to be carefully analyzed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this research project was a tedious and difficult task. The interviews created hundreds of pages of data to be reviewed and analyzed. This process included having interviews transcribed, reviewing and rereading transcriptions and taking notes, coding interviews, and reviewing codes from each interview.

One major factor in doing narrative research is the amount of information gathered. Understanding this factor and time constraints, I decided employ a transcriptionist to aid in the project. Before the project began, I found a transcriptionist and she agreed to transcribe for the entirety of project. I paid the transcriptionist from personal funds. The transcriptionist had previous experience with research projects and completed the appropriate UNCG form to participate in the project. Following each interview, I uploaded the audio recordings to a secure drop box and shared with the approved transcriptionist. The transcriptionist completed each interview and saved it to the secure drop box. After each interview was transcribed, I reviewed it by listening to the audio file while following along with the transcription. There were some acronyms, names, and words transcribed incorrectly that were corrected following the transcriptions. Reviewing the transcriptions also required some restructuring and labeling the conversations indicating the participant or the researcher. These transcriptions produced many pages of raw data to be analyzed.

After the initial rereading of the transcriptions to ensure matching audio and typed files, I read each interview and took notes. During this reading, I also looked back at the handwritten notes taken during the interviews. I also took notes to begin the coding process and to prepare questions for the next interview. During these first notes, I highlighted, underlined, and noted specific stories and epiphanies. Following the readings for general notes, I read each interview to code and identify significant stories and events shared. These codes included, but were not limited to childhood, early church experience, pastoral influence, music, church involvement, church service, family, relationships, college, college ministry, divinity school/seminary, doubt, fear, discouragement, affirmation, ordination, women minister models, call, Baptists, and professional ministry experience. After first readings for coding, I combined the codes if needed to help with analysis and allow for consistency. For example: the code “birth family” included mother, father, grandparents, and siblings. Following coding, I copied the coded pieces and pasted into another document for future analysis and organization. I went through this process for each interview. When I combined codes for the second and third interviews, I used a different color type to identify the interview it originated from. I shared this analysis with the research participants so they could understand how the process of coding and identifying specific events took place and to view their shared stories in the eyes and mind of the researcher. As participants reviewed their stories, they were often critical of their language, some noting the amount of “ums” they used or their sentence structure and organization of thought when sharing. Participants were also

amazed at seeing their stories broken down into specific themes and parts. The reading and coding of these interviews was a lengthy process involving patience and diligence.

Final analysis was done by reviewing the codes from each interview in relation to each other. This process occurred by printing the documents created in the coding process with specific events and themes listed together on colored paper. Each participant was assigned a certain color of paper. The codes and themes were cut into separate pieces. These pieces of paper were then placed on a large working space in my home office. These pieces were grouped by matching similar codes and themes. This allowed for a better understanding of the major themes across participants. This process was helpful for me personally as a researcher because I am a visual learner and an organizer. The colors and groupings aided in formulating my final analysis.

The data analysis for this narrative research project was a huge task. Each interview was reviewed and treated with the upmost respect. During readings, analysis and following analysis, each story, its codes and themes, was interpreted through the lens of God's call to ministry, response to the call, and ways Baptist churches and individuals can help in the nurturing of call, the central research focuses of the research and through the lens of a Christian, Baptist, Feminist Theology framework.

Confidentiality and Security

Narrative research requires great attention to confidentiality and information security. Intentional measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and security. All participants were assigned pseudonyms. These pseudonyms have been used in interview transcripts and in the presentation of the data. Participants were given the opportunity to

choose their own pseudonyms or have them assigned. Three chose their own pseudonyms and two were assigned pseudonyms. Other identifying names, locations, churches, and organizations were given pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. A master document that links participant's names to the pseudonyms was stored on the researcher's password protected computer, in a separate file from the data. All hard copies of the data were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office, along with the signed consent forms. Back-up digital copies of the data were saved on a jump drive and also stored in a locked cabinet. Audio interview recordings were locked in a separate cabinet. Because voices are potentially identifiable, audio recordings were only shared between the researcher and the transcriptionist, who agreed to total confidentiality. All of the information gathered through interviews and personal communication with participants will be kept for four years and then destroyed. Absolute confidentiality of data provided through the Internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of internet access. Therefore, research participants were encouraged to take their own security measures during email communication concerning the study. All email communication on behalf of the research was saved in a password protected email folder under its own pseudonym. These confidentiality and security measures were taken (1), to ensure the legitimacy of the research and (2), to assist in creating an open relationship between researcher and participants based on trust and confidentiality. While there are always risks of being identified in such studies, all of these measures were taken to lessen the possibility of identification. As with analysis, the data and its participants were treated

with great respect through these confidentiality and security measures. Confidentiality and security were an important aspect of handling data for this research.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Trustworthiness and credibility are important for the validity of any research. Trustworthiness and credibility were established as a part of this research through creating respectful relationships with participants, prolonged engagement, member checking, and rich description. As stated earlier in reference to choosing participants, establishing an open and honest relationship between me, the researcher, and the participants was an important aspect of this research. I worked hard to be open and honest about my own call and passion for this project. I created opportunities for direct communication between me and the participants between interviews. This relationship offered opportunities for prolonged engagement. The length of the interviews provided a significant amount of time to spend with the participants. These long interviews and communication between interviews encouraged trustworthiness. Member checking added to the credibility of the research. Co-creating is a part of narrative research. As a researcher, I worked with the participants to share their stories. Each participant reviewed and offered feedback on their interviews, codes, and written analysis. This allowed for accountability in analysis and presentation. Finally, rich description of the participant's stories and themes aided in the trustworthiness and credibility of the research. Because I spent so much time with the participants and their stories, I could provide detailed descriptions to help in the presentation of the narratives and analysis.

Each of these strategies helped in providing trustworthy and credible research for this project.

Conclusion

The narrative approach proved to be an appropriate and valuable research method for the topic of call experiences of Baptist women in ministry. The narrative approach allowed for honesty in relation to my own personal subjectivity as a researcher and allowed the stories of the women to guide the research. The details of narrative approach used have been presented through the explanation of personal subjectivity and reflexivity, the central research questions, how participants were chosen, risks and benefits, interview methods, data analysis, and confidentiality and security measures. Every aspect of the research was guided by the central research questions and informed by my theoretical framework.

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ADDENDUM

Interview 2 Questions

1. What first made you think about pursuing ministry as a career?
2. How did you know ministry was a career option for you?
3. What has helped you affirm your decision of ministry as a career?
4. How have you seen God present in your pursuit of ministry as a career?
5. What were your first thoughts or feelings when you knew that God had called you or wanted you to pursue ministry as a career?
6. What was the most exciting aspect of your calling or desire to go into ministry?
7. Was there anything scary or unsettling for you about going into the ministry?
8. Did you share your call experience or your desire or want or need to go into the ministry with your family or your friends or with your church. With whom? Why or why not?
9. Did you approach anyone to help you navigate or pursue ministry as a career?
10. Did the church or any individuals nurture your calling in any way, and if so, how?
11. Did the church or any individuals discourage your calling in any way and if so, how?
12. How has your call to the ministry or the desire to pursue ministry as a career have helped to ministering to others who have felt led?
13. What advice would you give Baptist churches and individuals about nurturing or supporting women that feel a desire or a call to ministry?
14. So why did you choose English or Education as your major in college? Why were you drawn to English or Education?
15. How your English or Education major helped you in ministry?
16. How have your church or ministry experiences affected your call to the ministry?
17. Why do you chose to be a part of the Baptist tradition?
18. Tell me about your ordination experience.
19. Are there any other aspects of your call experience or your desire to serve in ministry that you would like to share that are important to you that maybe you have not have a chance to share.

Interview 3 Questions

1. After looking over themes and interesting aspects of your story, did anything surprise you?
2. Do you think anything important was left out of your story or not emphasized enough?
3. After reading over points and themes of your story, are there parts you struggle with?
4. Did you learn anything about yourself or your call by looking back through the interview points?
5. Are there any other questions you think I should ask in discovering more about the call experiences of Baptist women?
6. What role do you think feminist theology or the women's movement has played in your call experience?
7. What theological framework or knowledge of call did you have before experiencing a personal call?
8. What do you think can be done to help people, especially Baptist people, better understand the idea of calling?
9. What has being a part of this research and process meant to you?